

# **Raising Resilient MKs**

# **Raising Resilient MKs:**

**Resources for Caregivers,  
Parents, and Teachers**

**Edited by Joyce M. Bowers**

**ACSI**  
**Association of Christian Schools International**

TO THE MEMORY OF

**Margie Bowers**

My sister-in-love

1952-1977

J.M.B.

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There are significant advantages of being born into a missionary home. Many outstanding Christian leaders grew up in mission settings.

Jack Layman is a leader in the international Christian school movement and long-time headmaster at Ben Lippen School, which has provided secondary education for generations of missionary children. After overseeing the education of hundreds of MKs, and conducting statistical and evaluative studies, Jack Layman concluded that, taken as a whole, children of missionaries are ahead of their monocultural American counterparts academically, spiritually, and even socially. Most readers of this book would concur that opportunities given to missionary children for cross-cultural learning and direct participation in the spread of the gospel are great privileges, which far outweigh any difficulties involved.

However, there are also hazards, as both critics and friends of the missionary enterprise point out. Not all MKs thrive. This volume is designed to shrink that number and increase the proportion of MKs who do flourish because of their heritage.

Joyce Bowers has compiled a truly encyclopedic reference library in one volume, treating every aspect of missionary children's experience. For many it's a long-awaited resource:

- Missionary parents should find it invaluable; it will impact the missions movement at its most critical—and vulnerable—point.
- Caretakers and educators of missionary children will find their concerns addressed in detail in a major portion of this volume.
- Adult MKs will find resources for understanding, evaluating, and responding to their own heritage.

With more than forty authors, both theoreticians and practitioners, you can expect a wealth of experience and research data. But with so many contributors, there are some things you should not expect:

- Don't expect all the essays to be of equal excellence. The quality is uneven.
- Don't expect all the authors to agree. One of the contributions of the book is to present varying, even opposing, viewpoints.
- Don't expect all theories or interpretations—even all “data”—to be equally convincing or meet with your approval.

If you are like me, some analyses will frustrate you and some proposed solutions dismay you. But we grow as we are motivated to

examine a variety of ideas and sort out what is valid and valuable in particular settings. For example, I would prefer more attention given to a broader frame of reference and less treatment of “the MK” as a single category with predictable characteristics.

My theory is that the common-denominator MK status is less formative than the particulars of each home, each culture, and the response of each child to his or her circumstances. On the other hand, I agree that bi-culturalism is a major factor in the formation of a person. We all have the option of developing our own approach, choosing what we will from the large variety of resources provided here.

The editor and publishers have reached their goal in providing the first of its kind, a unique contribution to the cause of world missions: a plethora of resources on how to raise resilient MKs.

Robertson McQuilkin

Executive Director, Evangelical Missiological Society 1994-97

For the past ten years, I have worked with missionary personnel through the Division for Global Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. My responsibility for family and children's concerns of missionaries included discussions with missionary candidates, whether parents, teachers, or houseparents. I always wanted to put resources in their hands which they could consult when needed. The two-volume compendium from ICMK Quito (International Conference on Missionary Kids held in January 1987) served that purpose well, but at least one volume is no longer available.

My awareness of MKs also comes from being the wife of one MK, the mother of two, the sister-in-law of four, and the aunt of five more, several of whom are preparing for their own missionary service.

I was aware of many excellent articles on MKs which had been published during the last decade, especially in *Interact* and *World Report*, as well as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. Many were based on presentations at post-ICMK regional conferences about MK issues, or on new research projects. My files of articles on MKs and their education grew thick over the years, but they were not easily shared with others. I wished that "someone out there" would compile a single resource book, similar to Kelly and Michelle O'Donnell's *Helping Missionaries Grow* (1988) or Kelly O'Donnell's *Missionary Care* (1992), both published by William Carey Library.

The idea that I should consider filling this gap was born in conversations at the 1996 Mental Health and Missions conference. John Powell and Dave Wickstrom, who founded that network of professionals in 1980 and coordinated it through 1997, were extremely supportive.

Not long afterwards, the coordinators for the three ICMKs, Dave Pollock, Paul Nelson, and Phil Renicks, constituted themselves as an editorial board and discussed the possibility of publishing a book which would make resources of the ICMKs and numerous other conferences available to new "generations" of MK caretakers, parents, and educators.

Their interest had developed independently from mine, but in God's providence we were brought together.

It has been a great pleasure to work with these three men, each of whom is fully committed to the growth of God's kingdom on earth, expressed through training and care for missionaries and their children. Their chapters in the final section, "Looking Toward the Future," are provocative and challenging.

Dave Pollock, who is the founder and Executive Director of Interaction, Inc., is the ultimate "people person." His analysis and articulation of TCK issues has been the foundation of much of the work in that field for two decades. The importance of Dave's contributions is reflected here, as eight chapters were written by him, and a ninth is based directly on his work. Dave's deep love for people is expressed even in discussions of nitty-gritty details of deadlines, editing, and revisions.

Paul Nelson was Superintendent of Education for Wycliffe Bible Translators when he co-chaired the ICMKs. Now he is President of Mission Training International. Paul has provided guidance and counsel during *numerous* telephone conversations and a few in-person consultations. His ability to listen well, identify basic issues, and suggest workable solutions is unsurpassed.

Phil Renicks is Vice President of International Ministries for the Association of Christian Schools International. Hundreds of pages of typed transcripts of ICMK Nairobi workshops came from his office, providing considerable groundwork for this book. ACSI has provided the expertise and facilities for the cover design and publication.

The ICMKs had contributed significantly to my own professional development. It was exciting to present a workshop on young families at ICMK Quito, when I had completed missionary service in Liberia and was a social worker in foster care. At that time, my direct involvement in what is now called "member care" for missionary families was still a dream.

The speech was riveting. For me, it put the conference in a package, wrapped it and tied a ribbon on it. I could not have imagined at the time that I would be the one to transcribe and edit that very presentation (Chapter 2) to make it available to a wide audience. Its relevance has only increased during the past eight years.

My tendency to be a collector of papers served me well, as I had original copies of the ICMK Nairobi schedules, workshop descriptions, and daily newspaper, which were a great help in working on this book. Eleven chapters are based on presentations made at Nairobi. With three exceptions (Hill, Edlin, and Gibbs) they have previously been available only on audiotape.

Although Janet Blomberg's name does not appear as an author, the stamp of her professionalism is evident throughout the book. The high quality of her work as editor of the quarterly *Interact* (from which

fourteen chapters have been reprinted or adapted), her comprehensive knowledge of MK issues, and her advice regarding material for this book, have contributed much to the quality of the product.

The person who has coached me through an incredible learning process, as I produced more than five hundred camera-ready pages for this book on a desktop computer, is free-lance editor Elizabeth Stout of Evanston, Illinois. In both copy editing and production editing, her attention to detail has given me a whole new definition of that phrase.

On a personal level, I was poignantly reminded of MK issues during the past year while reading letters and diaries of Margie Bowers, my late sister-in-law. The image of the “signet ring” is from one of her diaries. If someone could have placed this book in her hands when she was a student at Wheaton College, she would have read it eagerly and been reassured that her experiences were perfectly normal.

Margie’s life was cut short at age 25 by a hunting knife in the hands of a “repeat offender.” Except for its tragic ending, Margie’s life was so typical of MKs that she would be an unlikely subject for a book. But in her desire to reflect Christ’s love to others, a major theme of this book, she was outstanding. The story of her brother Tom’s spiritual journey, as he wrestled with his need to forgive the man who took his sister’s life, was told in *The Christian Reader* (June 1993) and *Decision Magazine*, April 1995.

The following is a short summary of Margie’s short life. The book is dedicated to her memory.

Joyce M. Bowers

## Margie Bowers

### In Memoriam

#### ***Her birth:***

April 12, 1952, small mission hospital, Zorzor, Liberia,  
a daughter following four sons.  
Her evangelist father trumpeted to the world:  
“Boy-oh-boy-oh-boy-oh-boy! A girl at last!”

#### ***Her life:***

Liberia: Totota, Sanoyea, Yanakwelle, Salala, Phebe;  
Typical MK life: home schooling, boarding school.  
High school at Ben Lippen, Asheville, North Carolina.  
Another year in Liberia, then Wheaton College;  
Finally, editorial assistant, Moody Press.

#### ***Her loves:***

Her best friend, God,  
In whom she confided more than in any human;  
Her parents, her brother Tom;  
Family, friends, church;  
Music, literature, making things for others.

#### ***Her death:***

April 29, 1977, Oak Park, Illinois.  
Sudden, violent, ugly.  
Headlines all over the U.S.;  
Controversy about the insanity plea.

#### ***Her prayer:***

*To be a signet ring for God;  
To leave the imprint of Christ’s image  
when pressed into the circumstances of life.*

# Part I:

# Historical Perspective

## 1.

### *Looking Back, Pressing Forward: The Legacy of the ICMKs*

Joyce M. Bowers

#### *A Brief Historical Sketch*

For over two centuries, Protestant cross-cultural mission has been carried out by couples and families as well as by single adults. At first, when no appropriate schooling was available on the field, children were sent back to their parents' country for education, often causing five to seven year family separations. Later, boarding schools were developed so that children could remain closer to their families and still receive the necessary education. Nineteenth-century missionary life required a pioneer spirit and willingness to endure physical and other hardships, but so did the immigrant life of thousands of Europeans who ventured forth to colonize and settle the New World.

Although the needs of missionary children were a primary concern of their families, especially their mothers, there was little attention given to them on a broad scale. A century ago, lengthy family separations were accepted as part of the price of fulfilling the Great Commission, along with painfully slow, unreliable communication, inadequate health care and the likelihood of death from childbirth or disease.

During the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, conditions gradually improved for missionaries as great advances were made in financial support, communication, travel, and health care. Following World War II, large numbers of North American missionaries were sent out, building on the foundations established through the sacrificial labor of earlier generations. The work of postwar missionaries was often blessed by spectacular responses to the Gospel and the establishment of independent national churches in many countries.

During the 1970s, issues of family dynamics became a new focus in Christian circles. It became acceptable for people to talk about their emotional wounds and to seek healing. Roles of Christian fathers and mothers, family relationships, and the influences of an increasingly complex and secular society were all of concern to Christians. It naturally followed that new questions were asked about missionary families and the tensions between family and work which had always been a part of

that life. In particular, boarding schools, accepted as God's provision for generations of missionaries, came under criticism.

### **ICMK Manila: November 1984**

During the early 1980s, people in Evangelical mission circles began to grapple with issues surrounding the increasingly spotlighted "missionary kid." The Children's Education Department of Wycliffe Bible Translators (led by Paul Nelson) in cooperation with Interaction (led by David Pollock) called together a committee to organize an international conference. The dreams of the committee were translated into reality as the first International Conference on Missionary Kids (ICMK) was hosted by Faith Academy in Manila, Philippines, in November 1984.

The first ICMK responded to concerns expressed by educators and others involved with MKs (Missionary Kids) around the world. School administrators, teachers, boarding home parents, counselors, parents, mission administrators, and adult MKs were aware of issues and challenges they held in common, but there had been no forum where they could explore implications and initiate joint actions.

Many of the issues needing coordinated action had surfaced as a result of significant changes taking place in the missions community. These included:

- worldwide technological explosion which radically changed travel and communication and provided new options for education
- movement away from large mission compounds resulting in cultural isolation for missionary families
- increase in missionaries having non-traditional roles in places with strong anti-missionary sentiment
- changing attitudes toward boarding homes for young children
- changing perspectives on the appropriate balance between ministry and family
- emergence of strong churches in the third world which sent increasing numbers of their own cross-cultural missionaries.

The 1984 conference theme, "New Directions in Missions: Implications for MKs," was designed to focus attention on these issues, their effects on missionary children and families, and strategies to address

the problems involved. Presentations and discussion in seven plenary sessions and forty-one workshops highlighted a wide range of challenges to MKs' reaching their full potential as multicultural people. Topics included pre-field preparation for missionary families, modification of educational programs on the field to accommodate changing clientele, and re-entry issues for MKs coming from the culture of their host country into the culture of their country of citizenship. The 336 delegates from six continents who attended ICMK Manila affirmed the value of addressing this broad range of issues.

Never before had there been broad-based public discussion of growing up in a multicultural environment. Awareness of missionary childhood experience as it shapes the way MKs function as adults was placed "on the map" by ICMK Manila. It became clear that two areas are crucial in determining the way an MK's life is molded: elements of a cross-cultural or multicultural childhood experience, and elements of growing up in the missions subculture. Both aspects of MK life are so basic they may be unnoticed, but both provide layers of complexity which have life-long implications.

Steering committee member Carol Richardson described ICMK Manila as follows:

Delegates came highly motivated to learn from one another and to contribute to one another. The intense, almost non-stop interaction between delegates the entire four days could be described as productive, exciting, encouraging, exhausting, overwhelming. In fact, for many delegates, cross-pollination of ideas, the sharing of resources, and the mutual encouragement centering around our pivot point—the MK—was the ultimate benefit of ICMK Manila.

The planners of ICMK Manila envisioned it as a "one of a kind" single event. However, as the conference progressed, the broad range of issues being discussed, along with their complexity and relevance to the missions community, prompted the delegates to present a formal request. They wanted the ICMK committee to remain intact, to plan followup activities and another International Conference on MKs!

During the next year, 1985, the newsletter *Interact* reported:

The measure of success of a conference is in its continuing result. Besides indications from individuals that their personal ministries have been helped, there have been planning sessions of mission board personnel to develop MK care programs and resource centers in the U.S., mini-consultations on alternative education on the field, articles discussing MK care at various levels, and personnel appointed by mission boards and organizations specifically to address MK needs. Several “MK Host Homes” are operating or are in various stages of development. A number of Christian colleges are awakening to ways of caring for their MKs and utilizing the skills and talents of these MKs.

A compendium was published which made the plenary sessions and workshops of ICMK Manila available to a much wider audience. The 488-page volume, prepared by Pam Mortenson and Beth Tetzl, titled *New Directions in Missions: Implications for MKs*.

### ***ICMK Quito: January 1987***

A second conference was planned for January 4–8, 1987, in Quito, Ecuador, co-hosted by Alliance Academy and radio station HCJB. The theme for this second conference, “MKs Nurtured by Communities,” was a response to the suggestion that a future conference focus on MKs themselves. Presentations and workshops identified communities that touch an MK’s life (home and host cultures, family, supporting churches, mission subculture, schools and colleges) and explored their nature. Issues of culture received a great deal of attention as host and home cultures were discussed from the perspective of the MK. There was unprecedented frankness in naming weaknesses in the missions subculture as it impacts families and children, as well as some passionate defense of the ways things had been done.

The concept of the “Flow of Care” for MKs presented at ICMK Manila was further developed at ICMK Quito. Emphasis on the MK as a “global nomad” being nurtured by caring communities gave structure to the conference. Plenary sessions were designed to set direction for the work sessions. Workshops and seminars furnished input for job and interest groupings. “Working workshops” of significant length provided

the opportunity for pooling delegates’ expertise and brainstorming strategies for future ministry together.

A mini-conference for boarding home parents was held just prior to ICMK Quito. Participants discussed boarding from the perspective of boarding home parents: successful models, roles, concerns, pre-field preparation, and the boarding program as a whole.

At ICMK Quito, a range of issues were explored from the point of view of the impact on the MK: interaction with family, supporting churches, mission agencies, MK schools, boarding homes, post-secondary education, vocational choices and spouses. It became clear that each had the potential for both positive and negative impact.

Many of the 538 delegates were MKs themselves. Some felt significant emotional pain as they identified with other MKs sharing the same struggles and conflicts. Others found strength in that identification, realizing that they had been provided with unique resources and opportunities to grow by being raised in a multinational environment. All of the delegates, whether MKs or not, were moved by a fuller understanding of the profound effects of growing up as an MK on one’s self-esteem, world view, life goals, and the potential to reach those goals.

The final afternoon of ICMK Quito was spent in job or interest groups. These groups were asked to suggest activities which would better serve the missions community and MKs. The groups produced lists with several hundred suggestions for articles, research, and services to be provided. The implementation of these initiatives was generally left to those who suggested them, but factors such as current responsibilities of the delegates and the geographic distance between them made follow-through unlikely.

The response to ICMK Quito was overwhelmingly positive. The following was reported in the newsletter *Interact*:

Adult MKs at the Quito conference indicated that they felt a new sense of purpose and identity. Some parents of MKs gained new insights into the life-long impact that growing up in a cross-cultural environment has on their children. Educators in MK schools were challenged to expand their curriculum to enhance the potential of the clientele they serve.

The communities of which missionary families are a part are becoming increasingly sensitized to specific ways they can help MKs realize the unique potential their lives represent. The pain and alienation discussed at ICMK-Quito are not necessarily the inevitable result of cross-cultural ministry.

There is hardly a mission agency in the world today that is not aware of the special needs of MKs. The climate is right to make some significant changes in the way missionary families are impacted by cross-cultural service, and ICMK is continuing to serve as a catalyst in this process.

A two-volume compendium was prepared based on presentations at ICMK Quito, edited by Alice Arathoon and Pam Echerd, SIL missionaries in Guatemala. It was published in 1989 by William Carey Library, with Volume 1 titled *Understanding and Nurturing the Missionary Family* and Volume 2 titled *Planning for MK Nurture*.

### ***ICMK Nairobi: November 1989***

The purposes of the ICMKs evolved from one conference to the next. ICMK Manila raised a general awareness of differences between children who grow up in a monocultural environment and those raised in the multicultural context of the missions community. ICMK Quito focused on the implications of those differences in the missions community. ICMK Nairobi focused on enhancing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages of those differences.

The theme for ICMK Nairobi was “Timely Responses to Today’s Realities: The MK Challenge in the Multinational Missions Community.” The theme reflected recognition of the multinational character of the missions community, and concerns for the care of missionary families and the education of missionary children of many nations.

The rationale for ICMK Nairobi was expressed in a statement written by Paul Nelson:

1. When multicultural young adults face difficulties in adjustment, the cause may be the result of inappropriate goals and expectations. People who spend a significant number of their developmental years outside their country of citizenship approach life in ways that differ from monocultural

individuals. It is assumed by some parents, school and mission administrators, and church leaders that both groups ought to have the same aspirations, values, world view, motivation, vocational options and potential. If so, the goal would be to provide an educational system for the multicultural child which was as similar to that of the monocultural child as circumstances permit. Involvement with and study of the host culture is viewed as a valued enhancement to education rather than designed as an integral part.

If this goal were realized, a multicultural child would be fully acculturated to his parents’ home country after leaving his adopted home. He or she would make a “normal” academic, linguistic and cultural transition into the system of higher education of that country and would hold the same values, world view, standards of success and vocational priorities as any well-educated monocultural Christian there.

Education and other support services of the homeland are designed to help young people function well as monocultural adults rather than to help multicultural youth recognize, value and develop their multicultural potential. It is relatively well documented that MKs will never be completely free of their multicultural heritage. To assume that educational programs and support services should be designed to minimize the effects of a multicultural background is to cause a potentially significant asset to be perceived as a deficiency. It should also be noted that most MKs have no desire to be free of their multicultural heritage.

2. As the missions community becomes increasingly multinational, it is impractical to develop parallel educational programs which seek to duplicate the educational system of every nationality working in a given region. Rather than work toward a strategy which would implement multiple tracks within MK schools to meet the needs of each nationality, it might be more constructive to work toward the development and implementation of a model to internationalize the schools which MKs attend. The focus of the curriculum would be on the broader concepts which form the basis for all exploration of

truth rather than on the cultural overlays which prevent students from seeing the universality of the concept. Skills required to interact with and apply these broad principles would be taught and reinforced in ways that reflect the various countries of citizenship, but incidental differences between approaches would not be given disproportionate attention.

Models for a curriculum which will fulfill this goal of a multinational education are being developed by a variety of international agencies. The challenge is to learn from what has already been done and adopt those which meet agreed-upon criteria. Some form of internationalization of the curriculum is being proposed at all levels in the educational systems of most first world countries.

3. The distinction between expatriate and national is artificial and inappropriate in the Body of Christ. The mandate to eliminate such distinctions among Believers is a major theme of the New Testament. As churches in host countries develop the kind of maturity and leadership necessary to assume responsibility for the activities and institutions previously established by expatriate missionaries, it is essential that both groups explore ways to achieve and maintain harmonious working relationships in spite of cultural differences.

MKs, as Christians whose faith is potentially less encumbered by the “ethnoradiance” characteristic of most cross-cultural workers, may have some significant contributions to make to the development of these working relationships and Scriptural unity. The next ICMK might well explore both the theological foundation as well as some practical ways MKs can get involved in developing and implementing Christian unity in this complex cross-cultural context.

ICMK Nairobi was hosted by Rift Valley Academy and Rosslyn Academy and met November 26 – December 2, 1989. Plans for meeting in the Kenyatta International Conference Centre were pre-empted by a high-level international government conference. Providentially, a new venue was identified: the beautiful United Nations complex on the outskirts of Nairobi. However, the new location required bus transportation from hotels, a major undertaking for nearly 700 delegates.

The format of ICMK Nairobi was more of a congress than a conference. Resolutions were presented for consideration in plenary sessions, with time allotted for clarifying issues, presenting rationale, identifying constraints, developing strategies, and proposing actions.

In recognition of the growing international and intercultural character of the missions community, the thrust of the Nairobi conference was the internationalizing, interculturalizing, or globalizing of the curriculum of MK schools. Two specific aspects of this were considered: 1) modification of the present curriculum to provide adequate credentials permitting non-North American MKs to continue their education with the greatest ease, and 2) modification of present curriculum to provide the greatest opportunity for students to develop their potential as cross-cultural and international persons.

The February 1990 issue of *Interact* reported that ICMK Nairobi had 686 delegates from 57 countries, representing 20 nationalities, 150 mission groups, and 127 schools (including 52 MK schools). The delegates included 119 adult MKs, 505 missionaries, 376 MK parents, 308 MK teachers, and 106 school administrators. (Many people were counted in more than one category.)

ICMK Nairobi ended with an outpouring of gratitude to God and to the planners and hosts of all the ICMKs. The week in Nairobi exceeded all expectations both in things accomplished and in professional and spiritual stimulation. It was a rewarding conclusion to the series of three ICMKs as they had evolved through the decade of the 1980s. By the end of ICMK Nairobi, there was a consensus that work on behalf of MKs and their families would most effectively be done by regional or special interest conferences rather than in general global conferences. The subsequent development of regional conferences is described in Chapter 53.

Some of the greatest values of the ICMKs were the interaction required to plan them, and the establishment of a worldwide network of people who have a vital interest in missionary families. The conferences provided the framework for forming working relationships, discussing essential issues, resolving conflicts, and establishing a sense of interdependence. ICMK was indeed a “timely response to today’s realities.”

## 2.

## *MKs in Perspective: Deacons for the 21st Century*

### Ted Ward

What has really happened during this week at ICMK Nairobi? Have we really been asked to think, or are we stuck with cliché answers?

For some of us, especially those who have attended other ICMKs, it has been a happy reunion, a celebration. For some, it's been a continuation of therapy, a continuation of reconciliation. For others it has offered the beginning of a long process of searching for self-understanding.

At best, ICMK Nairobi has been a renewal of hope. At worst, it has been one more affirmation of alienation and loneliness. In any conference where we focus on troubles and problems, there is a terrible danger of self-pity. But there is also the danger of denial. I hope that those of us who are still in a mode of denial will open ourselves up to the ministry of God as Holy Spirit in restoration, healing, and forgiveness.

For others of us it has been a professional learning experience. Our jobs relate to human pain, and we learn so we can help others better. But here again, a danger lurks. We may put it all in our heads, while the problems are really in the hearts. We dare not *feel* less simply because we *learn* more. And there is a danger of oversimplification. Important problems deserve careful solutions.

### *An Ongoing Process*

In this conference we've been able to see a process some of us began in Manila, some in Quito, and some this week. It has a similar pattern for almost everyone.

1. *Naming the problems.* Any good counselor knows that when you can name your problems and face up to them, you're halfway home.

2. *Defining the problems.* We have learned more about how things fit together.

3. *Facing our own personal histories,* seeking personal therapy and self-discovery. And watch out, many of the emotional problems and

most of the needs that we identify as MK problems are in fact not unique to MKs or overseas kids. Many of these problems are exacerbated by the overseas situation, but in fact they are the challenges of growing up in a complex world.

4. *Finding support, building constructive networks.* That's one of the greatest things that happens when we take the time, effort, and money to come together and really share. There are things you can't do on paper or in books.

5. *Realizing that we are not simply the victims of social situations,* but in fact in this whole business of being God's witness in the world, we *confront principalities and powers*, many of which have invaded the mission system.

### *Problems and Possibilities*

There are problems which must be solved, and we've begun to open them up. We've begun to see people propose possibilities and commit themselves to action. Let me name just a few:

- Selection, training, and inservice education of dorm parents
- Selection, training, and inservice education of missionary kid school teachers
- Pre-field preparation of whole families
- On-field support assistances for whole families
- (Dare I say it?) Coming to grips with legalistic theology and the social hangups it has created for us.
- (If I can get away with that one, the last one on my list is:) Non-Christian management styles within our mission operations.

Never ask a fish to describe how it feels to live in the water. A fish cannot describe that context, because it has no perspective. It's our own culture, the culture of being a missionary, that's the hardest to see. Do we really understand our own peculiar subcultures as foreigners, as missionaries, as returning persons, as helpers?

### **Needs**

A process of increased understanding has unfolded from Manila to Quito to Nairobi. Some *needs* are becoming very clear:

- to gain perspective
- to understand ourselves better
- to learn to forgive, which is a spiritual task
- to learn to help.

### **Motives**

In addition, there are some *motives* which have emerged through the three ICMK conferences:

- to comprehend sources of problems, not simply identify them
- to plan strategies of change, not simply to complain about conditions
- to commit ourselves to positive roles.

In this conference something very important has happened. It has been evident that many of us have been enlisted, and many have accepted the challenge. We expect to hear significant things in the future that have their roots in commitments made this week.

Another *motive* that is emerging is: to recognize and emphasize the advantages of being bicultural and multilingual, and ultimately to connect that with the very important Christian task of learning the culture of the Kingdom.

When we use the terms “transculture” and “transcultural” we ought to recognize that this is not simply a nice option if you have time to work on it. Transculturalness is what it is all about to be a Christian in this world. Just ahead, we may anticipate that many of us will be helping the people of God become intercultural, or better yet, become transcultural. The energy from this conference and through the people here, moving into the church of Jesus Christ, is marvelous to contemplate.

One of the things that I find exciting about the ICMK conferences is that they are the most clearly cross-sectional in terms of gender, age, roles, type of mission work, and mission organization, of any gathering

that missionaries ever engage in—much more so, for example, than field councils or home conferences, any one church’s missionary conferences, or typical meetings of IFMA and EFMA.

There’s real promise here for some kind of long-term venture in which we learn to communicate effectively within the community of faith about the overseas mission of the church. Just ahead also may be some inroads into what I believe to be one of the most crucial problems that we deal with in this series of conferences, and that is to loosen the deadly grip of secular culture on our missionary kid schools.

### **Pitfalls**

What do we need next? Some have suggested topical conferences; some have suggested regional conferences. Whatever we do, we must watch out for the pitfalls. I see the major pitfall as the tendency to blame—the tendency to affix the guilt and assume that’s why we’re here. I felt it first in Manila where there was a tendency to blame the *schools*. But it’s too easy to blame the schools, and it’s not going to solve anything just to fix the blame. We came on to Quito, and there we learned to blame the *family*. Many of us engaged in a kind of therapeutic catharsis, and maybe we needed it. We tended to dramatize family relationships as being the crux of the problem. That was a pitfall. I think we’ve come perilously close here in Nairobi to blaming the *missions*—maybe the next step in the blaming process. We seem to want to fix the guilt somewhere.

### **A Broader Perspective**

But let me suggest we get a little broader perspective. All of these things fit within a context which has to be seen as the whole community of mission—a community that exists as culture of its own impinged upon by about five other cultural functions, and producing a kind of lifestyle peculiar to itself that is somewhat asynchronous, not harmonized with virtually any of the rest of those cultures and in some cases asynchronous, with the *transcultural perspective of the Kingdom of God*.

I think that would be an interesting theme for a conference. Could you get anybody to come? In every case where we have focused on one

aspect or another, the true lurking demon is simplistic cause-and-effect models which cause us to assume that certain kinds of therapies are needed, and once we have them in place, it will all get better. I think we have to get at the whole context, not just treat symptoms.

Nairobi is a milestone. If in the past we pointed to school issues, kids' issues, adult and MK issues, Nairobi has broadened that to mission family issues and readied us to think in terms of cultural context. I've said it before: I don't think the MK is the right unit of analysis. We need to look at larger contexts through which the missions community shapes the mission family and thus shapes Mks.

### ***Who Are We?***

The first step is to get to know ourselves. We need to see how we have come to be what we are. Our uniqueness in our particular cultural context—the combination of our own culture and the culture of the country to which we have been called—makes us “green” in Ruth Goring Stewart's metaphor. Uniqueness is the hallmark of being Christian in the next century.

What's wrong with being green? What's wrong with being unique? What's wrong with being Christ's ones? *Not a thing is wrong with that!* Let's focus it.

### ***The Mind of Christ***

The second step is orienting that uniqueness toward Christ. “Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” And a crucial passage, Philippians 2: 5-11, “Let this mind be in you”—a mind of servanthood, not a mind of claiming rights. Here's how we sound: “This is my right as an Englishman; this is my right as an American; this is my right as an Australian.” Where is, “Let this mind be in you, the mind of the servant, even the servant who is obedient to death.”?

*Take a loose hold on life. It's not the best we've got coming.*

### ***Cultural Flexibility***

Then step three: Move all of that toward cultural flexibility. Gain some skills. Learn how to be as Christ was — from another place, from another standard of life. And as we all know, he left it behind, as the Philippians passage states, and he became an example of a person moving into another culture and coping with it extremely well. We also see in the Apostle Paul evidence of this same kind of capacity to be culturally flexible. Paul was a man of several cultures, but a man called of God to minister in expanding ways in the world because he dedicated that multicultural framework built on his experiences to the service of Jesus Christ. He moved out effectively because he was adaptive and he could be “all things to all people.” What a marvelous thing to have written on your tombstone! Think about that kind of transcendence—beyond our personal needs and aspirations; beyond our desire to serve each other; beyond missions as outreach.

Christ is glorified in his church. The church must be in a culture, and yet the church must rise above culture. That is the meaning of “transcultural.” It's bigger than intercultural. I'm not satisfied that an intercultural curriculum, though valid, will answer the whole problem. Virtually all the educational enterprises of the world today are currently looking at such issues as globalization, internationalization, and larger scale world perspective building. Every country in the world has made at least some effort in this regard. We live in a world where in order to be competent, you literally have to be intercultural to some degree. Because of the ethos that we have created around ourselves, we as Americans (and I speak as an American, self-critically) have become complacent, even though our own country is rapidly becoming a combination of three major racial groups.

Multilingualism is common in American cities, but North American churches still remain monolingual. Multilingualism is an absolute necessity to function well in the city of Los Angeles, the city of Miami, and a dozen other places in the United States unless you stay in your ghetto—and we are often quite content to do just that. God help us!

The MK situation is but one case of the larger task of the church. As Brian Hill says, the MK is a potential resource for the church, and I think we need to keep saying this.

### *Serving the Church as Deacons*

As we leave Nairobi, let us go forth with a new awareness of what it is to serve the church as deacons. That's a strange twist in the conversation, but follow me closely. The first fulfillment of the meaning of deacon is recorded in Acts 6:1–7. The church at that point was a local assembly or series of assemblies in one place. They were not yet looking outward. Although they had the Great Commission ringing in their ears—to go first to Jerusalem, then Judea, then outward to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world—they were still quite content to stay in Jerusalem.

But, because they were a normal group of human beings, there were cultural problems. There are cultural or subcultural problems in every church of Jesus Christ, and I believe that the intention of God was that his people would know how to cope with cultural problems. Why do I think that? Because the first problem identified as something to be dealt with by the people of God in that first church in Jerusalem was racial prejudice, bias, and neglect. It is a very human tendency that exists everywhere because of the fallenness of humankind. It even infects the church of Jesus Christ — it did in Jerusalem, and it still does today.

The focus was the neglect of the widows of the Greek Christian community, Greeks who probably had been proselyted into Judaism and then on into Christianity. If that's not third culture, I don't know what is. And those third-culture people, who were outsiders even though they were Christians, were being neglected by the majority. It was this that provoked the apostles to call together the whole community and (to paraphrase Acts 6:2) “It is not good for these unresolved cultural dissonances to keep us all from effective and worshipful focus on the Word of God.” Read it closely. The need then and now was to identify special people within that community whose backgrounds prepared them for that moment when the church needed help with cultural bias and ethnocentric selfishness.

So, they identified seven people. Listen closely and see if you notice anything, if you know anything about the languages of the Mediterranean. First, Stephen—we know about him. We've also heard about Philip. Procorus—now, there's an unlikely Jewish name! Nicanor—hmm, he didn't run the delicatessen. Timon—he probably

wasn't the son of a Levite. Parmenas—another one of those sneaky Greeks. And Luke says specifically of Nicholaus that he was from Antioch, a Gentile.

Isn't that an interesting list! They picked their third-culture kids! Think about it. The original deacons were the ones commissioned to deal with the problem of ethnic dissonance within the body of faith. May God give us a crop of people who understand, because they've been there, what it is to come to terms with being a transcultural Christian. Do you see why I'm so hopeful about MKs? But where in the world today is a church with a problem like that, that would select seven people from the minority to deal with the minority problem?

Things aren't as they should be. Racism still infects the church. Racism still blights missions. It is an evidence of fallenness. Racism and cultural superiority—we politely call it ethnocentrism. But whether it is Americans who do it, or Chinese or Nigerians, it is evidence of fallenness and sin. Evidence of being *normal* human beings. Evidence of being *natural* human beings. The catch is, we haven't been called to be *natural* anything, folks. We've been called to be *different*!

We do need to take a look at organizational lethargy, sometimes too attached to the old ways, or the way we've always done it. But we also need to look at ethnic aloofness, defended in many places by such questionable notions as “the homogeneous unit principle.” Many facets of the missionary community engender aloofness, suspicion, fear, and anger. No wonder we've got problems. We are not always a good reflection of our Lord, the Prince of Peace. For all of us—MKs, parents of MKs, teachers, counselors, researchers, executives—“becoming green” in Ruth Goring Stewart's sense involves pain and risk. And making the most of multicultural background requires effort. It requires assistance; we all need help. But more important, it requires Christian grace and humility.

Based on the closing address at ICMK Nairobi.

# Part II:

## MKs, TCKs and the Body of Christ

Resolution XIV  
*Discipleship*

Whereas MKs are faced with multiple challenges in living consistent Christian lives, and

Whereas it is vital that MKs be trained as World Christians,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi resolve that the greatest responsibility held by all who work with MKs is to train them in the ways of the Lord, so that they may live as responsible, responsive servants of Christ in the world community.

Resolution XV  
*Christian Nurture*

We, the MKs of ICMK Nairobi, are grateful to the Lord for the time, energy, and monies spent on the issues involving us, our families, and the other MKs to come, of all nationalities. We stand with the entire delegation in affirming the resolutions to aid the present and future MKs to become all they can be in God's grace.

We commit ourselves to a more active and responsible role in the Body of Christ, and to continue care and support of MKs of all nations, irrespective of their professions, recognizing that any vocation chosen under God's guidance is sacred.

We thank the Lord for the unique opportunities of being MKs, and the experiences he has used and continues to use to mold us into his likeness.

### 3.

## *Discipleship: The Kingdom Perspective*

David C. Pollock

When Jesus commissioned the disciples, he said, “As the Father sent me, so send I you” (John 20:21). When he prayed, he said, “Father, I have glorified you,” and then he prayed that we would glorify God. The glory of God is the demonstration of his character. The fulfillment of the Great Commission is not a simple cognitive process of hearing certain facts, but it is living the reality of the Good News.

In dealing with any young people, but especially missionary kids, there is a controlling way of thinking that must superintend our attitudes and behavior. The commitment to glorify God is the main ingredient of that mindset and its impact.

Jim Reapsome has written that mission strategy is articulated in Jesus’ prayer, “My prayer is ... that all of them may be one, Father, ... that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20–21). This unity is the product of obedience to the specific commandment in John 13:34 that we love one another as Christ has loved us. This love is the identifying mark of a Christian. As Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The first International Conference on Missionary Kids was built around the concept of a *flow of care* enveloping every phase of the experience of overseas missions personnel. The underlying concept that gave rise to that process, now adopted by even the Foreign Service Youth Foundation of the U.S. State Department, was, and is, the directive to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). There has been growing attention to member care in mission organizations not only because of the pressures of the day, but also based on the conviction that Jesus was serious when he spoke the words recorded in John 13–17.

The consciousness leading to change of policy and programs for personnel care is making a long-term impact on missions. A significant number of mission leaders want to make Jesus’ message the operative principle of their own ministries and of all the personnel policies and

practices of their agencies. The functional definition of the love Jesus talked about is choosing to act on behalf of one another. Such action forces the world to acknowledge that we are his disciples. Besides testimony to the world of our reconciliation to Christ, there is also a pragmatic impact of reducing attrition from the missionary ranks.

### *Jesus’ Model for Christian Faith and Witness*

John 13 describes three breathtakingly simple vignettes which portray some of the bedrock of our Christian faith. First, Jesus gathered the disciples in an upper room in preparation for the Passover meal. It was customary for a servant or perhaps the least important person at a gathering to wash the feet of guests. Instead, Jesus, the host, did an amazing thing. John 13:3–4 says, “And Jesus, knowing that he had come from the Father and all things were put under him, removed his robe and wrapped a towel around his waist.”

Because he knew who he was, he was able to be the servant, and to foreshadow what he was about to do on the cross: serve them. So he took a basin and water and washed their feet—twelve pairs, including Judas. After he finished, Jesus said to them, “You call Me Master and Lord, and you do well because that’s exactly who I am. You have seen what I have just done to you. Do it to each other.”

Second, they broke bread together and he gave them another glimpse of what was going to happen: “This is my body, broken for you. This is my blood, shed for you.” They had no idea what he was talking about until after his death and resurrection, but those simple words and actions of Jesus have become a central symbol of the Christian faith. For 2,000 years the followers of Jesus all over the world have remembered and re-enacted that modest yet profound scene every time they celebrate the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion.

Third, after the supper had been eaten and Judas had been dismissed, Jesus said to the disciples, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have this love one for another.*” This statement is as radical in its implications as Jesus’ actions in washing the disciples’ feet or his words about his body and blood. The issue of loving one another is tied,

without a breath in between, to the issue of making an impact on the world. For all time, Jesus established that *the Great Commandment and the Great Commission are inseparable*.

### ***Mission Strategy***

At missions conferences we often talk about strategy. How are we going to reach the world for Christ? We worry about things like recruiting enough people and producing literature and how to share the gospel in countries where traditional missionaries aren't welcome. There's nothing wrong with strategy—the Apostle Paul had a strategy which determined how he would approach a community. When we talk about missions, we also discuss tools—the technology that has exploded in recent years. I believe God has given us this technology just at the time the population of the world has exploded, so that it is possible to obey the Great Commission in our generation. When we think about missions, it's appropriate to think about strategy and technology. However, in that process, we must also look at some basic issues Jesus said must be at the heart of our strategy.

Jesus tells us a radically different way to make an impact, because the world has a way of observing us carefully and asking what makes us different. When we invest in the care of missionaries and their children out of hearts filled with the love of Christ, we are doing mission, because the community sees that and says, “Behold how they love one another.”

During a bus ride in India, I had a conversation with an Indian man who told me he was working for the government helping poor people to develop housing. I said, “That's interesting. My son and daughter-in-law are involved in the Solomon Islands as directors of a project under Habitat for Humanity.” He said, “That's a Christian organization, isn't it?” “Yes.” As he asked that, I turned and saw his eyes brimming with tears. He said, “I am so ashamed of being a Muslim. We're too busy waging wars and getting revenge. *We usually don't do those things* [acts of caring]. Why do you?”

I was so glad he asked. For the next forty-five minutes I told him about the love of Jesus Christ shed abroad in our hearts. You see, what attracted him and raised the question was not great arguments, great

strategy, or technology, as good as those things are. It was that someone did something with no other motivation but the love of Jesus Christ.

Caring for missionary kids and missionary families is not an appendage to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It's not simply an accommodation for human weakness, or the fact that some people can't hold it together when they're overseas. It is the opportunity to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ among ourselves so that the world has to say, “Behold, how they love one another. Why?” Then we can tell them of the love of Christ. The issue of caring for missionary kids is valid because we've been given a directive by the King of Kings.

This emphasis is being seen in awareness of the need for adequate pre-field orientation for international school personnel. For more than ten years such a program has been available in the U.S., and now a similar program is in the United Kingdom. The theme for the pre-field orientation sponsored by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and Interaction has been “caring enough to learn, learning enough to care.” Each year more mission agencies and international Christian schools make this program a requirement for their school personnel, because of the need to prepare people to actively and accurately extend the love of Christ toward these young people and ultimately to their families. It is what we *are* that enables us to invest in the lives of the kids God has given to us. Delivering better service is more critical than delivering better curriculum.

### ***Two-Thirds World Missionary Kids***

I stand in awe of what God is doing in raising up missionaries from the two-thirds world, especially Asia. God gave his people the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and there's a great genius in the whole process of being sent. Those to whom others were sent in the past are now the ones who are sending. This is a source of great delight and wonder. We need to pay attention to where God is going and be very careful to move along closely behind him. The old sending countries have responsibility to support and aid the new sending countries in a variety of ways, including their member care.

The importance of missionary family needs is recognized among people in leadership and responsibility in two-thirds world missions. A few persons are engaged in full-time ministry to Asian missionary children and families, but the importance of that ministry is just being recognized. This is an area of great potential for growth in vision and ministry.

The children of two-thirds world missionaries sometimes experience great pain. Some struggle to learn English so they can go to school, the language of the country where they are placed, the language of the tribe or community where their parents minister, and also try to hang on to their mother tongue. All that creates a lot of confusion and stress in the family. Some families see their children changing drastically—becoming more American than Chinese or Korean—and their hearts ache. They are confused and wonder about the decisions they have made. They have been far more costly than they thought they would be, should be, or need to be. God has given us unique opportunities to minister across cultural and community lines. I pray that God will give us the vision to do this well.

### ***Motivation for Working with Missionary Kids***

In the rush and pressure of our lives, we sometimes need to remind ourselves of the basic motivations for serving MKs and their families. There are three things that motivate me to work with missionary kids and other third-culture kids.

#### ***The Presence of Missionary Kids***

The simple presence of missionary kids motivates me. Just the fact that they're there automatically makes them a subject for our attention and our concern. Under normal circumstances, there is no time or place where people apologize for working with kids. We have youth programs in our churches. Every country has educational systems. Why should we need an apologetic for why we are working with TCKs? Their very presence gives us opportunities to demonstrate Christ's love. Jesus said, "By this [love] shall all people know that you are my disciples."

Obedience to the full counsel of Scripture is critical to acting in love. The Scripture is clear in revealing God's regard for children. In Matthew 19, Peter asks Jesus, "What do we get out of this? We've given up so much." Jesus answers, "If you have given up houses and lands and children and other things, you will get back a hundredfold." The tragedy is that over the history of modern missions that has become the proof text for brushing kids aside, with the message that giving up kids is OK. In Matthew 19, Jesus said this to Peter, who had asked "What do I get out of it? I've given up a lot." In essence, Jesus was saying, "Peter, God is no one's debtor. Whatever you do give up, God gives back in multiples."

While focusing on Matthew 19, we have tended to forget what Jesus said in Matthew 18: "If you cause one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better if a millstone were tied around your neck, and you were cast into the sea." That's serious! The whole 18th chapter of Matthew underlines God's view of the care of children. There could be no greater apologetic for MK care; the basic reason is *God said to do it*. Simply the presence of MKs makes ministry to them valid, critically important, and in obedience to what Jesus said we need to be doing in relationship to kids.

Sometimes missionaries whose ministry is teaching or caregiving for MKs are asked "Why aren't you a *real* missionary?" MK care may be considered less strategic in comparison to evangelism or church planting, but ministry to MKs *is* being a real missionary. MKs need Christ too. Missionary children are born sinners too, and they need to come to know Jesus Christ—even the "good" kids who obey all the rules and do what is expected. Those who know Christ and are part of the family of God require compassionate care as well.

#### ***The Needs of Missionary Parents***

I am involved with missionary kids on account of their parents. We minister to MKs so that parents are able to do the task that God has given them. This does not imply that others should take over parenting MKs. The responsibility is to come alongside the TCK as part of the caring community and alongside parents to help them be parents. To be prepared to assist in critical situations, whether in the home country or overseas, is the role of the MK/TCK caregiver. Education, discipleship,

comfort, correction, and support are areas of responsibility that must be filled.

Not all the TCKs in mission schools are MKs. We have the opportunity to represent Christ to both children and their parents. All TCKs in our care deserve to be treated with equal concern and care. Making disciples involves the communication of the Good News, bringing the person into the Kingdom and letting the Holy Spirit work. It also involves making disciples and teaching them to obey what has been commanded.

Families are able to stay on the field because their kids are cared for. In a recent very large study on missionary attrition, between 9% and 35% of attrition worldwide is because of issues related to kids, especially educational issues. When there are problems and tensions in MK schools, the entire mission community is affected. When teachers and administrators get disgruntled and nip away at each other, they are undermining missions. When children are not treated well, parents cannot stay.

### ***The Potential of Missionary Kids***

We are involved with missionary kids because of the potential each one has to do the task that God has given him or her. In the United States, InterVarsity sponsors a conference every three years at Urbana, Illinois. Nineteen thousand young people attended that last missions conference. The Christian community invests millions of dollars to bring together 19,000 mainly monocultural young people to challenge them about missions. Yet, we find it difficult to raise funds to invest in missionary kids who know the language, respond to the culture, and who have a perspective on missions that helps get on with the task. Though not every missionary kid ought to be a missionary, we ought to be doing things that will enable them to consider their place in the Kingdom. In one survey we discovered that 25% of missionary kids went back as missionaries, and 17% as career missionaries. That's worth investing in!

At one re-entry seminar, we sat around the dinner table with a group of young people from Latin America. During the conversation I said to them, "You've been part of the missions community all your lives. If you were to take over, what would you do?" There was silence for a

moment. Then they began to talk, and I realized I was listening to a discussion of missiology that grew out of a rather well-founded base. I was amazed at their perceptions. After they had talked for an hour or so, I asked, "In the light of what you think should happen to reach Latin America, what do you think you ought to do about it?" One young man, whose father had told me his son wanted nothing to do with Latin America, looked at me and said, "I guess maybe I'll have to go back." And he has prepared to do exactly that.

When we look at the potential for our TCKs in the Kingdom, we realize that we are an important part of what's happening. Some day the kids in our classrooms may get together and talk about their teachers and what effect we had on their lives. What will they say about our influence?

### ***The Role of Shepherd***

I Peter was written to people who were internationally mobile—people in transition. It addresses specific elements of leadership that are applicable to how we survive and how we succeed as mobile people. To understand I Peter better, we need to recall what Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Fishing was a very respected vocation in that time and place. Peter was a professional, and he was doing what was expected by maintaining the family craft and business. However, the authoritative call of Jesus resulted in Peter's leaving his nets.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter went back to his fishing again. He must have been totally confused, needing to return to something he knew how to handle. Jesus met him there; they had breakfast together and had a very serious conversation. Jesus said, "Peter, do you love me?" "You know that I love you." "Feed my sheep." The same exchange was repeated *three times*. But *fishermen don't feed sheep!* Shepherds feed sheep. We have a career change for Peter!

Peter himself wrote years later to the elders and called them shepherds (I Peter 5:1ff). It was no big deal to be a shepherd. Shepherding was far from a respected profession. 2000 years ago, if you were

a shepherd and were an eyewitness to a crime, you could not give witness in court because you weren't important. Peter was saying, be a shepherd in the spirit of Matthew 20—if you want to be first you need to be last.

When we look at the meaning of being a shepherd in the context of care for missionary kids, there are four important roles of shepherds:

- **a defender**—someone who protects children and youth. Sometimes we protect them from ourselves, from our own sinful tendencies. If we can't see God taking control in our lives of things that may affect children adversely, then we need to get out of this business. It's better to pack up and leave than to cause those little ones to stumble.

Sometimes we have to defend students against others. I can't tell you the horror stories I have heard over the years. If you are where you know that kids are being abused in any way, you dare not walk away with your mouth shut. Chapter 49 of this volume, titled "You Are a Protector," deals with this in more detail.

Part of being a defender is protecting kids against cultural insensitivity, which hurts deeply and leaves lasting scars. Educators need to find out the means by which a culture motivates its children's education. It is very different from one culture to another. If the kids come from another culture, they and their parents may be confused about what the teacher is trying to do in the classroom. If one culture dominates in a school, we need to remind parents that students and teachers carry their cultural values into the classroom. Truth in advertising is important.

Cultural insensitivity may be expressed through humor. What may be a side-splitting joke in one culture is very offensive in another. I have talked to kids who have been not just offended, but bruised deeply because of what other people consider humor in their culture. When we cause somebody to lose face, or the joke is not funny to everyone, then it's just not funny. We need to be sensitive to the issues of humor and be prepared to apologize in humility when we err. We need to protect children against the insensitivity of adults as well as their peers.

In our counseling we need to defend. Many MK/TCK workers come from individualistic societies, and are counseling kids from collectivistic societies. Caution must be used in counseling to avoid difficulties in relationships. A young guy says he likes someone and wants to date her,

but his parents object. The individualist says, "Hey, it's your life!" In a collective society, it's not just *his* life, but a matter for the whole family and community. When we counsel, we have to protect those kids against our own cultural biases.

The role of teacher or administrator carries more authority and power in one culture than in another. The teacher from a culture characterized by "small power distance," where fear and respect are not equated with the role, may unintentionally misuse the strength of that position in dealing with a young person from a culture where there is "large power distance."

A lot of things can undermine, discourage, and defeat young people. Part of our task is to defend kids against discouragement, to come alongside and encourage them when they're down, and comfort them in their pain. Part of loving is to protect the individual and the unity of the body of believers. We do not defend the unity of the body with physical strength, power, and toughness, but with the demonstration of loving each other in obedience to the Lord Jesus.

- **a discipler and a developer**—someone who is a mentor, helping kids develop so they can take all the skills and abilities of the third-culture experience and put them into practice throughout their lives.

A discipler enables someone else to be and accomplish. The leader is a catalyst who passes ideas on to others, comes alongside someone else, helps him or her grasp a vision, and then says, "How can I help you do it? What resources and encouragement do you need to help you move in that direction?"

Discipleship is not simply a cognitive exercise, the hearing and committing to a mental process—a list of constructs. It is the affective processing of what one has been taught, where one becomes a "doer of the word and not a hearer only" (Mark 3:14). Jesus called his disciples to be with him so he would walk with them through the flow of life's experiences before sending them out. The Christian educator or caregiver, as a discipler, walks through life experiences with young people. It is not only hearing what the discipler says, but seeing and experiencing what he or she does that becomes the matrix for development. In walking with students through practical community

ministry, a teacher can demonstrate his own growth and encourage similar growth in the student.

- **a dreamer**—someone who sees what a student could become and dreams on his behalf. Leadership involves dreaming for other people. What can they be? What kind of investment can we make in their lives to set them free to be what God has intended?

Do you know what an overseer does? Sees over. You can always tell the difference between the shepherd and the sheep because the shepherd is the guy who stands on his hind legs. The sheep are on all fours, grubbing around in the grass. The shepherd stands up tall and sees the green pastures, the still waters, the rock ledges, and the predators in the bushes. He sees the brambles where wool can be pulled out of the hide of his animals. He dreams on their behalf, for their protection, for what they can be. He sees beyond for them.

What's your vision for the kids in your classroom or dormitory? When you see that squealing kid, the one who drives you nuts, do you ever think that the most bothersome kids are often the ones to shake the world because they've got enough gumption to do so? Are you dreamers for the kids you have, or are you just churning them through their educational experience?

- **a demonstrator**—Peter says, “be an example to the flock.” Students need to see Jesus Christ at work in you. They need to see you demonstrating the love of Christ, because then they will learn how to do it. The whole concept of the flow of care is doing the right thing at the right time for the third-culture kid. You will influence kids because they will be able to say, “I know what it is to be a good teacher or caregiver, because I have some models.” Are you doing what God has given you to do? Have you really grabbed hold of it and said, “This is my task. I'm going to do it, and do it well, for Christ's sake”?

Those who work with third-culture kids have a part to play in world evangelism. Bear in mind that Jesus' strategy was “that you love one another.” The Great Commandment and the Great Commission are inseparable, and in working with MKs and other TCKs we have the greatest opportunity to demonstrate both.

I pray that God will excite our hearts and minds, and that we will recognize that God has placed us in a unique role of being able to invest in the lives of third-culture kids, and in doing that, to affect the Kingdom for eternity. We can't even begin to imagine what that means, but we can allow ourselves to be used in a dynamic way as we follow closely in Jesus' footsteps.

## 4.

### *Developing a Flow of Care*

#### **David C. Pollock**

Recently I watched a spring bubbling from the ground along a footpath in the woods. It formed a small pool and flowed out into two streams that tumbled down a hill. In the natural scheme of things, they would ultimately meet each other, and in their flowing and growing would nourish, refresh, cleanse, sustain, and give life overall.

As I get older, I have a sense of the importance of clarifying the history, present activity, and future direction of my life. Perhaps to some degree it is to justify it, sometimes to order it, and even to simplify it. Mostly, however, it is an effort to contribute to those who follow. Maybe it is an attempt to sort the gold and silver from wood and hay. Whatever the motivator, springs and rivulets give me a significant metaphor for my life as an individual and for the Body of Christ. One source and two streams: these blend into one flow to give life.

#### *One Source*

Paul captures the focal point of eternity and time as he writes “Christ is the image of God”—creator, initiator, sustainer, head of the body, reconciler and perfecter (Col. 1:15–23). Thinking in a Christian way begins and ends with a comprehensive view of Christ. Recognizing who Christ is fulfills Peter’s directive to be “clear-minded” (1 Pet. 4:7). Peter did this in responding to Jesus’ question in Matthew 16:15, “Who do you say that I am?” The answer to that question lays the foundation for the remainder of Peter’s admonition to “those scattered abroad . . . Be clear-minded, self-controlled so that you can pray and love one another deeply.” The progression is from thinking and believing right to choosing, acting, and loving right.

James (1:5) captures the concept of thinking right with his admonition to seek godly wisdom. The main issue in that wisdom is clearly perceiving the person, Jesus. Once established, the reasonable conclusion is that we become doers and not hearers only. James pushes us

to recognize that sin is not only doing the wrong but it is knowing what is good and not doing it (4:17).

In his first letter, John indicates that the identity of a believer is determined by observing if he thinks (believes) right about Jesus, chooses right, and loves right. He builds his criteria on the basis of the person of Jesus Christ himself who is light, life, and love. John’s introduction to this book (1 John 1:3) states “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard (clear-minded) so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.”

Jesus is the spring, the source of whom his Father said, “This is my beloved son...Listen to him” (Luke 9:35). We must listen to Jesus when he prays (John 17: 21–23), “Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one . . . I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know you sent me.” Isn’t this unity in how we think, how we choose, and how we love? Jesus is the source and he sets the flow of the two streams. Listen to his commands.

#### *Stream One*

“A new commandment I give to you that you love one another. By this will all people know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” “If you love me you will obey what I command.” “This is my command: Love each other” (John 13:34–5; 14:15; 15:17).

The irrefutable evidence of God’s supernatural intervention in human affairs confronts a lost mankind through the action of a believer on behalf of another person for the other’s good. It is the demonstration of God’s character in the people he has reconciled to himself and to each other. Love is the stuff his people are made of.

- “For God so loved the world that He gave . . .” (John 3:16).
- “God demonstrates His love for us . . .” (Rom. 5:8).
- “Love your neighbor as your self” (Luke 10:27).
- “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

- “If your enemy is hungry, feed him” (Rom. 12:20).
- “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

### ***Stream Two***

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go (and as you are going) make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:18–20).

The two streams, the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, are inseparable. Sometimes in our zeal to be responsive to one we ignore or minimize the other. The Great Commission cannot be fulfilled without obedience to the Great Commandment. The evidence to the watching world is the fulfillment of God’s command. Ultimately, the discipling of that world is focused on directing the new believer to obedience to that command.

Is it possible that the Great Commission is more easily obeyed than the Great Commandment? Defining love as action on behalf of another—even an enemy—may be a sticking point for all of us. The good Samaritan was faced with expenditure of time and money, inconvenience, readjusting priorities, and perhaps even disdain from the one he rescued. Would it be less demanding to be a priest or Levite slipping by to do some teaching or preaching, or to perform some act of worship in the synagogue?

Our struggle in the missions community may be somewhat like the travelers from Jerusalem to Jericho. We don’t have a list of specific reasons why two of the three fellow travelers “passed by on the other side of the road.” Their identity, as priest and Levite, may be a clue to their reasons. Perhaps it related to their religious position. Perhaps they even had religious tasks to perform that could not be ignored. Perhaps they had a great commission to obey and they could not allow themselves to be sidetracked. Jesus’ evaluation shakes me to my roots. Many times when a task I perceived as obedience to the Great Commission preempted obedience to the Great Commandment. I live with reminders of the results in my life and the lives of others.

Failure to respond to the Great Commandment removes the most convincing piece of divinely appointed evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and that we are his disciples. But there’s more. It leaves a weaker brother and sister open to discouragement, failure, and brokenness. It makes lonely coworkers vulnerable to attack and breakdown. It undermines the relationships of those attempting to respond to the Great Commission and diminishes their effectiveness. In missions, much of the attrition, with its waste of people and resources, is readily traceable to our failure to intervene appropriately at the right places in the life of the missionary, the family as a whole, and missionary kids. It is important to remember that obedience to the Great Commandment in the missions context is not simply a matter of pragmatism and damage control. It is obedience to Christ’s command.

How do we in the missions community, who are committed to the source, navigate both streams successfully? The starting point is full-hearted acknowledgement of the biblical mandate and unreserved obedience to the source. Thinking right moves to choosing right and flows readily to acting right.

The Samaritan on his way to Jericho immediately evaluated the situation and took action to correct the problem. The action was both immediate and long term, in view of both rescue and recovery. Had he been there sooner he might have intervened to prevent everyone’s grief and pain. Love is preventative as well as therapeutic. We start by identifying the points of where intervention can be preventative, recognize the places where care and comfort are required, and plan for the therapeutic when required. We must consider the flow of care for the individual from “so send I you” to the “come home to your rest” of the Lord Jesus.

### ***The Flow of Care***

If we listen to the needs and issues expressed by experienced personnel, the details of the flow of care will increase and be refined, and modified and customized in the process of change. The next chapter of this book suggests ways to provide the flow of care for MKs and missionary families.

The concept of the flow of care was the theme and foundation of the first International Conference on Missionary Kids (ICMK) in Manila in 1984. Within a short time the Family Liaison Office of the U.S. State Department and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation adopted the idea as basic to their program of assistance to foreign service families. Many in the business community who wanted to improve the “bottom line” by increasing efficiency and effectiveness and minimizing unnecessary attrition are expressing interest in the techniques of delivering care to their personnel. There is also a growing interest in developing the leadership potential of young people growing up in the “third culture” or expatriate community. Organizations such as Emerging Young Leaders are very aware that such development requires a caring support system.

### ***Conclusions***

For us who flow on the crest of two streams from the same source there should be no question about our enthusiastic (God within) participation in such. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission are inseparable. To do it requires a cooperative commitment of administrators and boards of directors. It will also require the cooperation and coordination of support personnel and organizations to provide the expertise for application at the significant points of intervention. A well-planned approach to the life of the missionary and other international personnel in order to facilitate the “flow of care” is not a far-fetched concept when we realize how much is at stake and see how responsive it is to the basic issues of the will of God.

*Do it!*

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## **Part III:**

# **Understanding MKs and TCKs**

Resolution I  
***MK/TCK Profile***

Whereas ICMK Manila expanded an awareness that there are differences between children who live in a monocultural, non-missions environment and MKs raised in the multicultural missions community, and

Whereas ICMK Quito focused on the implications of the differences between children who are raised in the parents' home country and the MKs who are raised in a country where their parents are not citizens,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi commit themselves to identify further and implement specific steps which will enhance the advantages and address the effects of the disadvantages of living in the monocultural context of the missions community.

Resolution II  
***Potential of the MK/TCK***

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi commit themselves to design and implement specific programs to affirm and enhance the unique potential of MKs and to encourage effective uses of the unique opportunities that growing up multiculturally and multilingually affords to children.

5.  
***Being a Third-Culture Kid: A Profile***

**David C. Pollock**

People on the move are not new in the experience of human history. Nomadic tribes follow from one food source or grazing spot to another. Partial groups of people are taken into captivity after defeat. Persecution and escape from natural disaster or famine have caused mobility, but usually other people of your own "tribe" move with you. The Abraham-type mobility, splitting a family, was common after World War II when improved transportation, expanded world awareness, and visions of global commerce triggered the mobility of individuals and families.

People living and working another culture today are affected not only by the host culture but the cultures of colleagues from other places. While remaining, for the most part, evident members of their home or passport cultures, their world view, values, flexibility, and intercultural abilities are altered. They are not truly members of their new culture(s) or place(s) of residence (Culture 2), but they are not what they would have been had they remained in their own country (Culture 1). These people have become members of a "third culture" and their children are "third culture kids."

The term *third-culture kid* is not a new one. It originated about forty years ago with Dr. Ruth Useem, a sociologist at Michigan State University. She and her husband were doing intensive work with U.S. business and government families on overseas assignments. While working with the adults, she also had an opportunity to observe the kids. She said, "There's something different about these kids. They function at a whole different level. They think differently. They have a different base, and a different point of reference." She coined the term *third-culture kid*.

Some have reacted negatively to the term either at an intellectual or emotional level. The term may be inadequate to meet sociological or anthropological demands, but it has given us a point of reference and has given the people who identify with this new "tribe" a point of identity and belonging. Whether or not calling this group a culture is accurate,

the fact remains that those who fulfill the definition share characteristics and perspectives that bind them together.

I was doing a seminar with foreign service kids some time ago, and one girl said, “When I sit down in the public school in Fairfax, Virginia, everybody else is saying, ‘I went to such and such a place during the summer vacation.’ But when I say, ‘When I was in Paris in July...’ the conversation comes to an end. But that’s where I was in July! If I’m going to talk about my life’s experiences, they relate to where I’ve been. They’re a part of the geography, part of the whole culture. I’m not trying to be smart or put anybody down. I listen to everybody else share their experiences, but I can’t say anything. When I do, it either stops the conversation, or somebody backs off, and I realize that I’ve made another social faux pas. It really hurts.”

She was in a group of thirty-five kids packed into a very small living room, absolutely delighted because she could do what third-culture kids can do with each other. She could say, “When I was in...” and the other kid could say, “And when I was in....” Nobody threatened anybody or was seen as arrogant. One of the delights of being a third-culture kid is finding other third-culture kids.

The general working definition for a third-culture kid is an *individual* who has spent a *significant* part of his or her *developmental* years in a culture other than that of the parents, resulting in integration of elements from both the host culture and parental culture into a third culture. The key words in this definition need to be explained:

**Individual.** Each person will respond differently to the experiences of life. Personality and temperament, experiences and perception, age when experiences occur, position and role in the family, to name a few, are variables in each person resulting in individualized reaction and response.

**Significant.** The amount of time for an individual to take on the characteristics of a Third-Culture Kid (TCK) varies with the individual.

**Developmental.** This is the issue which makes the experience of a young person different from that of the parent. Mobility, and the impact of a variety of cultural influences, will shape a developing individual more profoundly than the mature adult can usually imagine.

When we explore the characteristics of TCKs, it is important to recognize that we are exploring tendencies. No two TCKs will have the exact experiences or perceive them the same. The variables mentioned above will shape TCKs differently as do the variables in any cultural group. For example, a person who has been in Ecuador from the age of one to the age of seven is not going to be impacted the same as the person who has been there from age one to eighteen. Another individual who comes at seven and leaves at eighteen will be on still a different footing. The period of development during which the person was in the other culture will determine the details.

Going home for the third-culture kid is not going home as his parents perceive it. If the parents are assigned to their “home” country for a year, the young person actually goes home at the *end* of the year when they all return to the overseas location.

### *In the Middle*

Often the TCK lives with a sense of being “in the middle.” Some years ago a college student named Ruth Goring wrote an essay entitled “I Am Green.” She said that she was neither the “blue” culture of her passport county nor the “yellow” culture of the host country. She was somehow a mix of the two (see Chapter 6).

There are other people who find themselves caught in a crack between passport and host countries. They are touched by both and identify with both, yet without a sense of being owned or owning either one.

In either case, TCKs often find they are at home everywhere and nowhere, all at the same time. Home may always be elsewhere, and a sense of rootedness at any point of geography may be unknown. One learns to adjust, survive, and succeed, but the sense of “place” is elusive.

Parents may be former missionaries, former foreign service people, or former international business people, but their kids will never be former third-culture kids. That identity doesn’t stop because Mom and Dad to back to Hometown, USA.

Pain often results when an individual returns to his home country at the age of twelve or thirteen. By the time he is in high school, he may be

far enough away from that experience to decide that he no longer can identify himself with third-culture kids. If he happens to be on a college campus where third-culture kids have a group that meets, he may stand at the edge, having the sense that somehow he belongs there, but insists, “I don’t belong.”

I met a fellow who came to one of the seminars we were doing in the Midwest on third-culture kids. He said, “That’s me. I’m a third – culture kid. All the lights went on. But I really am not, because I was twelve when we came home.”

I said, “That doesn’t change anything. You’re still a third-culture kid.” (He is no longer a kid—that’s another problem with the term.) He said, “Do you mean that I really am a part?”

After the session I went to the lobby and sat down, and third-culture kids came from all over the place. As the fellow I had been talking to walked into the room, he hesitated at the back of the group for a moment, then made his way through, and sat on the floor right in the middle. He was as happy as a pig in the mud. He joined the conversation and talked about his experiences of coming home, and how painful it was not to go back or to have had a chance to say good-bye, and on and on. He came up to me afterward and said, “This is the first time since I was twelve that I have felt that I belonged.”

Our tendency is to think that children have unlimited resilience. You can do anything with kids and they bounce and they adjust. Sure they do. We’re all made to adjust, and adjustment does take place. Whether or not it’s good adjustment, and whether or not it leaves a residue of pain, is a different matter. When a kid at five years of age is taken away from an *ayah* and brought back to the United States, he may have suddenly lost someone who was extremely important. That *ayah* may have played a role in the child’s life that was very close to, or maybe superseded the relationship with the mother. We have to bear in mind that these are real live people who have real live feelings and real live memories.

It’s also important to emphasize that third-culture kids have the same needs as every other human being. They are no different from anyone else. Being very mobile and living in a cross-cultural setting

creates complexities in the meeting of those needs. Individual personalities have various levels of resilience. That resilience has limits but it can also be enhanced and supported by wise and informed caregivers.

It is important to remember that there is a third-culturedness inside the borders of one’s own country. I was doing a seminar in Addis Ababa, and a Kenyan in foreign service said, “I was never outside my country as a teenager, but my father was involved in government, and we moved from tribal area to tribal area. This sounds like me.” It may be that some people moving from Massachusetts to California have moved from one deeply rooted and distinct culture to a very different culture. There may be “third culture-ness” inside national borders that produces experiences similar to the international TCK.

There are other variations in the TCK experience. Let me go to the Department of Defense as an illustration. Even though the American bubble is carried along with the military, there is a military culture and there is an American culture. An individual may find herself crossed between those two cultures. Basically it’s still American culture, but the subculture of the military presents a different set of values that influence the individual. She is the product of two *cultural* influences in her life as well as the high mobility of the military community.

There are some third-culture kids who try not to identify with other third-culture kids in their home country because they are reminded of the hurts they carry with them. Some try desperately to fit in, because someone has communicated to them that it’s really not OK to be a third-culture kid. “If you’re going back to your own country, be like the kids there.”

### ***Tendencies: A Profile of TCK-ness***

The two major overlays or categories of influence for the TCK are 1) transition from mobility and 2) the transcultural experience. Both influences have significant benefits for most people but at the same time both produce challenges that must be recognized and addressed.

***Overlay #1: Mobility.*** Most TCKs develop significant flexibility and adaptability. Seeing, hearing, tasting, and smelling new things is a

way of life for most and contributes to their ability to accept and adjust to what is new and different. This significant benefit, coupled with their experience, if not habit, of moving frequently or regularly, contributes to a sense of rootlessness. Belonging everywhere and nowhere has a major impact on one's identity. Home is always "elsewhere" for many TCKs and they often long to get to the "other place" in order to feel at home.

For some, the struggle with identity and belonging is intensified when they still have a sense of belonging overseas after having returned to their passport country. Some say or imply that the TCK must "get over" their TCK-ness and fit in with (become exactly like) the people in the passport country. Return as a younger child may also contribute to the individual's belief that his TCK-ness is invalid.

The solution for many is to recognize that other third-culture kids are their "tribe." Others who share the experiences of growing up in a culture other than their own make up this "tribe." Beyond belonging to the tribe, the individual needs to recognize that the TCK effect is not a disease. Responses are understandable and normal, given the influences and experiences.

Frequent and regular mobility, broad world perspective, rich memories, and a confidence in change, may all contribute to a migratory instinct. Mobility is not wrong, but being victimized by it may be destructive to individuals and those around them. Moves during educational years may be deeply disruptive. Career paths can be frustrated by moving too soon and too often. Members of the family of origin may be stressed by the lack of stability and lack of proximity.

The nuclear family subsequently formed by the TCK may also fall victim to frequent relocation. This may undermine the relationship of the couple and in turn may create undue and destructive tension with their children. Such mobility makes long-term planning difficult, intensifying the tendency to focus on the "now" without being free to make proper and reasonable choices for the future. Some TCKs fail to plan for the future or to make their preferences known because their mobility as children often preempted desires and choices made, leaving them disappointed and sad. Many learn to cope by refusing to reveal preferences and solid plans for the future.

TCKs seem to find their rootedness in relationship rather than in geography. When they consider where they belong, they think in terms of people rather than place. They generally value relationships highly, but also have the sense that loss comes to all at some time. For some, there may be a chronic sense of impermanence and dread of anticipated loss.

The result of this combination of effects is something of a paradox. On the one hand, TCKs tend to develop friendships fairly quickly and on a deeper level than most non-TCKs. They have had practice doing it—living lives enriched by communication and the sense of urgency because of mobility. On the other hand, TCKs may be guarded in developing relationships and careful not to allow others to know them too well and thus become too vulnerable. When you move, you may not want to leave unguarded information in the hands of people who no longer feel a loyalty to you. They may also limit intimacy to reduce the pain of separation. Such responses may be appropriate in the normal flow of a mobile lifestyle. The problems arise when these habits are carried into relationships such as the family of origin, marriage, parenting, and deeper lifetime friendships.

Because of the regular experience of leaving or being left, highly mobile young people may develop a "quick release response." When there is a hint of another separation, real or suspected, the TCK may let go of a relationship too soon and too fast. This is a defense against the pain of separation, but it can be destructive to relationships that could be long and meaningful.

Unresolved grief is not an uncommon result of a TCK's multiple losses. The lack of permission to grieve, time to process grief, or people to empathize and comfort, may result in repression of grief. Anger, depression, over-sympathizing with others in grief, and sometimes delayed grief responses triggered by what may seem insignificant losses may be indicators of unresolved grief.

The TCK often develops a strong independence. The ability to function on one's own is one of the necessities of mobility. However, when independence goes unchecked, isolation from others can produce unnecessary and inappropriate loneliness.

Dr. Ruth Useem noted in her research that it was not unusual for TCKs to experience what she called “delayed adolescence and delayed adolescent rebellion.” There may be several factors related to both mobility and cultural exposure that contribute to this. The TCK may be actually more mature than the peer counterpart in the country of origin. Factors contributing to this maturity include expectations and demands for certain behavior, relationship to adults in the international community, independence, communication skills (including multiple language ability), and knowledge based on a “big world” exposure.

There is uneven maturity, however, because of knowledge of one’s passport culture and its ways may be limited, with gaps in social skills, interpersonal relationships, humor, and general rules of cultural behavior and etiquette. Sometimes there is the overlay of “grieving one’s childhood,” wherein the individual discovers certain aspects of experience and relationships that were nonexistent or deficient in the place where he or she grew up. There may be a longing to experience what others in the “home” culture had.

Delayed adolescent rebellion may be the result, not of rebellion, but an emotionally charged combination of unresolved grief, anger, and loneliness, and no longer sensing the need to be compliant. TCKs need to know that such a response may emerge in their early twenties. It does not necessarily damage one’s life unless rash decisions are made or actions taken which have irreversible or far reaching consequences.

Over the long haul of one’s life, the benefits of mobility can far outweigh the difficulties. But the challenges must be addressed both before and when they arise. Knowing the dangers allows us to make better choices.

**Overlay #2: Cultural Exposure.** A TCK may respond in a variety of ways and intensities to multicultural input. Parents’ attitudes and behavior, agency policies, and the individual’s personality and attitudes are some of the variables which determine cultural influence beyond the forcefulness of the culture itself. Influences include the parents’ passport culture or cultures, the culture of the sponsoring agency, the school or schools attended, the host culture itself, caregivers, and the expatriate (third-culture) community itself.

The greatest benefit is the world view developed by most TCKs. It is three-dimensional, with not only knowledge but understanding and empathy. The sense of security in getting around in the world and acting appropriately in it is significant preparation. The person can become a cultural bridge and an active, positive influence in an increasingly intercultural world.

Challenges include the pain of seeing the real world with its hunger, sickness, cruelty, injustice, war, and death. The TCK often sees the world very differently than those who have never “been there.” Another challenge is dealing with people who have not had travel opportunities. TCKs may appear to be less patriotic or loyal to their country of passport because of a broader experience, and seeing that country from a different perspective. They may also be impatient with others because of their lack of experience, willing ignorance, or limited perspective. The TCK is challenged to be patient and understanding of those who have had less opportunity.

There is a serious need to be aware of and guard against the tendency to be arrogant about one’s experience and knowledge. Sometimes it helps to remember that the TCK did not usually have this broad experience by choice, but rather as the product of parental decisions. Nor is the monocultural person usually that way by choice, but the product of parental choices and opportunities.

TCKs can recognize that the monocultural person usually knows things about one culture that they may need to learn, while the TCK has cultural knowledge from outside. Such knowledge serves TCKs well in many situations in life, but they may feel like “hidden immigrants” in their passport country. The sense of being off balance because of unknown history, rules, people, or humor, can be a shock to some. A lack of understanding of home country values—and sometimes conflict with them—creates a sense of being an alien. A Korean TCK said “I think I am more comfortable as a foreigner in a foreign country than being a disguised stranger in my own country.”

TCKs as adaptable, flexible observers are sensitive to prejudice, and tend to be compliant and suspend judgment of others. They can be “cultural bridges” and mentors for others’ attempts to more cross-culturally. The stress of being caught in the middle of cultural difference

is a challenge, but the skills and insights of TCKs made them extremely important in today's world. Language skills need to be valued, developed, and used in connection with cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity.

As Ted Ward has been quoted, "The TCK of today is the prototype of the citizen of the twenty-first century." The TCK is also a person of the twentieth century and a culture broker in a changing, demanding future.

## **6.** *I Am Green*

### **Ruth Goring**

#### **I. I Wish**

Growing up between two cultures  
is a tense  
liberating frustrating  
bruising hilarious exciting  
experience.

I feel like a perpetual visitor  
always a transient, never wholly a part  
"cultural relativism" is all very well, but  
sometimes I wish I could identify completely  
with something, some group, somewhere . . .

#### **II. U.S.A.**

grassy tree-lined suburban streets  
lawnmowers, defrosters, supermarkets, pizza  
Chevrolets, chocolate-chip cookies, clocks and calendars  
shorts and T-shirts, "Love American Style"

distance  
cold  
dry  
sarcastic

always new activities,  
new possessions  
I am a consumer.

I move through  
laugh, cringe, grow, plan  
buy, complain, enjoy  
but still—only a visitor.



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## 7. *The Real Value of Growing Up Overseas*

**Michael G. Loftis**

They say you can tell how much international experience a child has by asking him a simple question, "What color is money?" Many American kids will look at you like you are crazy for asking such an obvious question. Most MKs I know will reply with another question, "What country are you talking about?"

The year was 1967. My parents had just made a decision that was earth shattering to a thirteen-year-old boy. They decided to become "missionaries." How could I leave junior high school, the security of my friendships, and all the wonderful things promised to a boy that age in the good old USA? I soon found out there were many facets to the gem that God wanted to chisel from the surface of my life.

At first I struggled with the downside of our family's decision. I thought about all we had "given up" to go down to a Caribbean island to evangelize a group of people who seemed happy enough without the Gospel. Why did we have to go?

My parents did their best. They talked about the wonderful adventure this missionary episode was going to be in our family life. My older sister and I rolled our eyes at one another. Parents can be so simple sometimes. How could they understand what we were missing? We thought about that a lot. We received letters from our friends back home talking about football games, cars, dates, Vietnam War protests at school, drug problems among their friends, angry discussions with their parents over dress codes and music styles, moral looseness, open debate in speech class about the merits of abortion, gay rights, and women's liberation.

### *Life Overseas*

Meanwhile we attended separate schools for girls and boys, wore uniforms, and stood at attention when the teacher entered the room until we were told to sit. We had to study Latin, Algebra, Chemistry, French,

Literature, Physics, Biology, and countless other useless topics. Along the way I learned to love and play the world's number one sport, soccer. We didn't have any workers at the little church my dad started, so I taught Sunday school to pre-schoolers from the time I was about fourteen. We also had no adult youth workers at our church, so my sister and I led our youth group of between 25 and 30 teenagers. Along the way we learned to speak the local dialect, won a national music competition for teenagers, counseled at junior camp, helped our mom start a youth choir, worked on church and camp construction projects, and even drove the van to pick up children for church and Sunday school. Some adventure.

Back home in the States, our friends wrote us letters about racial conflicts at school. The "Black Power" movement grabbed national headlines. I attended a school of 1,000 boys where I was one of only four whites in the student body. My best friends came from African, Indian, Chinese, and Armenian heritages. Most of my friends were of mixed parentage. Many never knew their fathers. Everyone was poor. They called me the "rich white boy from America." I resented that. Didn't everyone know my dad was a preacher? Back home no one ever called me rich. My parents could never afford to buy all the latest teen fads in brand-name clothes and shoes that created instant status and acceptance at school. Didn't these people understand that?

### ***Re-Entry***

The day came for our family to return to the United States on furlough and suddenly I didn't want to go back there. This warm place filled with smiling faces and all colors of skin was truly home to me, not that place where I no longer fit or played their silly social games for status. God was slowly chiseling me into a world-conscious Christian.

Coming home to attend college was at first an intimidating experience. After all, my peers were for the most part veterans of the status wars they had battled in high schools back home. Dating was a moral and cultural no-no down in the islands. Here it was the ultimate in status seeking and personal fulfillment. Once again I found myself struggling against values I resented, and they were supposed to represent my own home culture. Where I didn't struggle was in class. My

education at the old-fashioned British school began to pay dividends in my studies. While my friends were figuring out how to get a date with the cutest girl, I was testing out of French and math. My background didn't hurt on the field either, where I was able to play four years of varsity soccer with other MKs and international students. I auditioned and sang with a traveling choir and began to seek out ministry among inner city children.

Along the way, I completed a doctorate and began to teach in college and seminary. My heart was always drawn to the plight of MKs and international students trying to adjust to life back in the States. I never worried about anyone's expectations for me to become a missionary like my dad because we have such different personalities. Following ten years of fulfilling ministry teaching groups of stimulating college young people, it happened.

### ***MKs and Ministry***

I was invited to visit Romania with a ministry team. There God squeezed my heart with the needs of a nation through the simple but profound words of a Romanian man of God I still consider to be a good friend. As I pondered the possibility of bringing back some of my students to experience the faith and perseverance of these generous saints who had endured persecution for their faith, this man challenged my assumption. "We don't need students," he said quietly. "It is teachers we need to train a new generation of Christian leaders." He had me. And so did God. I chose to come back to the mission field, but not because of some expectation or pressure from my parents or others.

Looking back now, I am awed at the wisdom of God in providing for me the absolute best in preparation for developing a world-Christian attitude. I instinctively look at so many things that happen in America from an outsider's point of view. I learned the ways of the street; to study the eyes, the posture, the gestures, the nonverbal but powerful language of life. I learned not to worry about making funny sounds in order to communicate in another person's language. Do MKs make a good missionaries? I suspect they make the best kind.

I learned to laugh at myself. Nobody laughs and cries more than a real missionary. Our family did lots of both. We worked hard, played

hard, laughed loudly, served long hours, and loved people all around us. Eventually they loved us back. But not all. There were personality conflicts, inter-mission disputes, and intramission politics. After a number of years in missions there, my dad was driven from the islands during a socialist revolution under false accusations of spying for the CIA. No matter. Today there stands a strong self-supporting church in that city and it touches hundreds of lives. Bitter? No way.

### ***Reflections of an Adult MK***

As an MK, if I learned nothing else I learned to be flexible. I learned that foreign is only a word. Every culture in the world is foreign to someone. At first it's scary, then irritating, then maddening. To survive you have to grab it, fall in love with it, and make it yours. God understands. He did it too. Kinship with Christ is a special benefit of missionary life. How must he have felt as he spoke to his own people who saw him only as a misfit, not as an emissary from the throne of heaven? Perhaps this is the greatest benefit and gift of being an MK, the opportunity to gain a glimpse of God's world from his viewpoint. Today I regularly move in and out of five or six countries, each having a different language. My own children have now lived in four countries and use bits and pieces of three languages. They will probably not even appreciate their background until they are at least my age. My wife and I try to practice the principles which were utilized in my home growing up: involve the whole family in ministry, do lots of fun things together, don't hide all the pain, and share the rewards of ministry.

Do we feel our children are deprived of a full life? They do miss their grandparents and cousins. So we try to encourage them to write letters and we send tapes and videotapes back and forth. Recently, my teenage son looked at me and said with a grin, "Dad, you're just not cool at all!" In this world full of wickedness racing away from God at breakneck speed, how can I teach the essential survival skills to my children? Would my son's statement about his dad's "coolness" have been any different had he been raised solely in the USA? I doubt it. But for me that is not the main issue. The most important part of my role in rearing my children is to provide them with a chance to learn to see the world from God's perspective, to face life realistically, and to flexibly

meet high goals for the glory of God. Will they make it? Nothing is guaranteed. But, go ahead, just ask my children the color of money.

Adapted with permission from *Interact*, October 1997.

## 8.

### *The MK's Advantage: Three Cultural Contexts*

#### **Ted Ward**

I hold a very positive view of intercultural experience as foundational in the development of fulfilled personhood in the modern complex world. Consequently, I view the MK growing up experience as very positive and very valuable, in comparison with the experiences available to their cousins who are stuck back home.

#### *Advantages of Growing Up Overseas*

Growing up overseas represents at least three kinds of head start: first of all, one of the most difficult problems in every Western society is the problem of coping with interpersonal relationships. More jobs are lost, more people drop out of school, and more people seek psychiatric help over that issue than any other. I submit that the intercultural experience carries with it the kind of flexibility that allows well-balanced young people to get a head start in coping with interpersonal relationships.

Beyond that, the overseas experience provides a concrete awareness of what the world is really like. Much tension and conflict in this world arise out of an ethnocentrism that is totally unaware of and unconcerned about the rest of the world.

There's another kind of head start, represented by the question, "What will my kid do to make money in life?" There is a trend toward an increased demand for internationally experienced young people to go into international careers if they have broken the language barrier. International experience and multilingual capability are more valuable than degrees in today's marketplace.

#### *Scars from Growing Up Interculturally*

Growing up leaves damage. Growing up leaves scars. Life is like that. But there is nothing wrong with us getting together to talk about

those scars and about ways to offset them. I refer to what I think of as the two key scars predictable in the intercultural growing up experience, whether missionary or other. I think they are inevitable, and to some extent they are painful and damaging, but so is life in any society.

#### *Disorientation*

I refer to the scars that are left by disorientation. There's a lot more that we can do about that than we're currently doing. Take a moment to imagine an experience that you and I could have together. We are together in a large city. Neither one of us knows the city. You stand on one street corner, and out of your sight I stand on another street corner. We each decide that we will just stand on those street corners for four hours and see how we feel at the end of the experience. Everyone walking by is a stranger, with the exception of one friend who walks by your street corner every thirty minutes and winks.

At the end of those four hours, I will be miserable; you will be comfortable. What made the difference? The reorienting experience that comes from involvement with other people, no matter how slight, through which we reaffirm our identity and reestablish our sense of who we are.

We can do far more than we are doing now if we understand what disorientation is and take more seriously the need for periodic orientation. When my wife and I were travelling a lot with our small children, periodically we would sit at breakfast in a strange place and say "Let's go through this. Here's where we are. Here's why we're here. And here's what's likely to happen." So far as my wife and I could make out, our kids never really suffered much from disorientation.

#### *Racism*

The other scar that is perhaps inevitable is the scar left by racism. Much that we do as expatriates can be seen as ethnocentric and racist. We need to name it. We need to work on it because it's part of the sinful tendency of human beings.

These scars are worth the price, but we should do what we can to reduce them and to reduce their negative effects.

### ***Our Goals for MKs***

However, we're after something far more significant than simply the reduction of scars. We're after the power in life that comes from disciplined resourcefulness. I will give you three to one any time on a missionary kid over anybody else in terms of disciplined resourcefulness. American kids today sometimes don't even know how to change the tire on a car.

Another of the great positives we're after is culture-learning skills—the capacity to learn culture. Just as you can learn how to do other things in life, you can learn how to learn culture. That's a tremendously powerful skill. It makes a person much more able to cope with the range and variety of situations that life holds.

The third of these great bottom lines is flexibility—the capacity to move internationally and interculturally and influence the world. Our young people have this benefit.

### ***Negative Stereotype***

There's a terrible negative stereotype that has developed around this whole business of growing up overseas. It is partly because of the misunderstandings of some of our novelists, such as James Michener.

James Michener doesn't understand the missionary community, and he understands MKs even less. His book *Hawaii* is deeply resented by the native Hawaiian population. His premises are that the missionaries did damage, and he makes even more of the fact that the MKs went bad. One of the first great missionary activities, the Sandwich Island Mission, was sponsored by a church in the United States, Park Street Church.

These missionaries took their families. That is an old American habit. Once they got the kids out there and they started growing up, they got kind of a second thought that said, "Oh, oh. What are we supposed to do now?"

You know what they did? That first group of Sandwich Island missionaries built a high school for their kids so they would have social interaction with nationals! They quickly reduced the Hawaiian language to print, put together enough Hawaiian language books to get a number of other kids ready, and within the fourth year of that mission in an

illiterate society, they had some native kids ready to go with their kids to the first MK school ever established overseas. That school stands today in Maui. It is a public high school and has been in continuous use since it was first built. The MKs didn't go home to Boston, because the families thought that the very people that Jesus Christ had called them to were worthy to be lived with.

Many of those MKs made the dreadful mistake, according to Michener, of intermarrying with Hawaiians. Do you know that the great first families of Hawaii have missionary grandmothers? Yes, indeed, the MKs became involved in commerce, in shipping, and in agriculture. They transformed that group of islands. They haven't done half the damage that the tourists have done, and the Hawaiians know it. They entered into society as the co-parents of an emerging culture.

I think even as Michener misunderstood missionaries, sometimes missionaries misunderstand culture. I've heard the word *culture* used as a static term to mean a kind of a thing that sits there. Culture, whatever else it is, is not static. It's being human and moving in and out from here to there, and being able to competently function in varieties of situations. Human cultures are not to be abandoned so that we can become third culture or anything else. Our cultures always profit from being expanded and blended. Would that the missionary community could accept the validity of expanding and blending their cultural ways with others.

### ***Cultural Contexts of the MK***

The MK is especially benefited by having three cultural contexts. Let me point out that I am talking about three cultural *contexts*, not three cultures.

The originator of the term *TCK*, third-culture kid, was a colleague of mine in the same department. In her original paper, Ruth Useem was talking technically about cultural variables that are not definable in terms of *ours* and *theirs*. She was talking about the dynamic in which people from outside settings residing in an inside setting do not take their primary identities ultimately from either, but they take it from the commonness that they have with others who are doing the same thing.

The first culture is one's own native base culture. Second culture is the culture into which one is knowingly adapting by virtue of being

somewhere else. Though in many cases one rejects particulars of the new culture, nevertheless one is living willingly within it. The third culture, and this was Ruth's insight, is that different little culture that's created by a whole bunch of people who are doing the second culture thing together, at the same time, in the same space, as they create their own community.

You may be interested in knowing that Ruth Useem and her husband, John, spent most of their lives in Asia studying the overseas intellectual communities of Western European and American people in the sciences and technology. Those transplanted technologists and scientists in Singapore would seek their friendships not among Singaporeans, but among others from Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Brazil, who were also technologists in Singapore. That was what she described as the third culture.

### ***First Cultural Context***

We should understand the cultural contexts in which we operate. First of all, every one of us operates as a child in some kind of community. The MK is a child of the missionary community. The starting place culture of that child is the culture of that base community. Now if you believe that the starting place culture of the missionary community of Quito, Ecuador, is exactly like the starting place community of white middle class Americans of Toledo, Ohio, you are wrong. They are not exactly alike, but they have a lot in common, however.

Think of it in terms of communities, not cultures. We all can understand *community*. The goal of that community is to produce an aware citizen with a sense of identity. But we've got a problem. Many people in American society today, and to some extent in some of the other Western societies, are not learning enough about the distinctives of their own culture. If I were to ask the typical person on the street in the United States, "Name five distinctly American values," he would give me a very quick one-word response, and it would be "Huh?"

One of the problems that the overseas family has is the need to comprehend at a fairly specific level what makes that base culture coherent. For example, we need to understand and be ready to help our children understand what our rituals are. We've got to come to grips with

the rituals that give a culture texture. What is the Fourth of July? What does it stand for? Why are there holidays on Presidents' birthdays? What was the Thanksgiving idea? Where did it come from? Why do Americans celebrate Christmas differently? Why is Christmas so commercialized? We need to understand that it's part of our value system.

Now you say, "Well, I'm not proud of part of it." That's all right. That's known as maturity, and people in any culture can come to a level of maturity that says, "Not everything about the way we are is glorious, but we understand it. We appreciate it. We value it, and sometimes we even defend it irrationally." That's part of a base culture.

What is it that we pick out to pass on to our kids? It's possible as a critical Christian to come to grips with the positive side of our culture and our history. What are the events that have shaped us?

In every society you can find some values that have their origin in a biblical premise. There's one that I find very interesting to reflect on. Americans tend to derive their identity and draw their self-awareness from a contemporary "who we are," rather than, as true in many other Western societies, "who our family has been and where our family came from."

"We know who we are." Americans like to say that. It's important that we know who we are—not who we were, but who we *are*. There are Europeans who like to keep pointing back and saying, "Here is where we came from." They look back. Americans always look in the present, and that is a strangely Christian view. The core of that idea is that as Christians, we are what we are because of what God is doing.

So there is a Christian root in that cultural value. But in a fallen world it goes sour. It turns into a kind of repression of our consciousness of our worldly heritage, the denial of our past. It turns into an excessive preoccupation with "me" and "here and now" and "my thing."

The core of many of our value ideas are sound, if we can help our kids peel them apart like a banana and find the good inside. We could do our culture a lot of good if we knew how to teach that, and if our kids were doing it competently. Americans overseas are typically more concerned about values than their cousins in the States. That's good. It's a benefit of a first, or base culture, context of the overseas growing-up experience.

### ***Second Cultural Context***

But there's a second cultural context, and this gets even better, because our second context is carved out of being friendly, voluntary participants in a host society. The goal of this process is becoming sojourners who learn. In any culture, we gain perspective on our own base culture as we see it from outside.

The biblical models are outstanding: Abraham in the Old Testament, who through his sojourning experience came to know who God was; Jesus as a focal person in the whole of God's plan, a tremendous example of a sojourner; and of course, Paul, who was the nomad of nomads. The great model missionary, don't forget, was an itinerant. These people were conforming to culture, but being transformed by that which is greater than culture, and using cultural experience as part of that transforming process.

One of the greatest benefits of experiencing a second culture is perspective. That perspective helps us see our own base culture more clearly. In the context of the other, we have an experience that is unavailable to the fish. The fish are never asked how it feels to live in the water, for the simple reason that fish have absolutely no way of comparing living in the water with living anywhere else. One reason that Americans can't tell you what it means to be American is because so few Americans have ever experienced it from a second cultural context.

I find MKs to be more understanding of the nature of American society than people who are raised wholly within it. Would that we could get that message across to parents. They think they've hurt their kids. They think God goofed. They think somehow God has to separately call everybody to every altitude, latitude, longitude, and attitude. That is a lot of bunk. Our God has called all of us into this world to be ministering persons in cultures. Whether I'm in some subcultural context in North America or somewhere else in the world, what's the difference?

Notice the frequency of the word *survive* in reference to other culture living. "How do you survive?" Every time you hear the word *survive*, replace it with the word *thrive*. Don't talk about survival kits. Anxieties for parents and children are far less if we use our second cultural context to better understand our first cultural context.

### ***Third Cultural Context***

The beauty of growing up overseas is a third cultural context that is actually a foretaste of what I see as twenty-first century Christianity. Today's Christian has the possibility of being called by God into service as a member of the international community of the Body of Christ. *World Christians*, a common, almost cliché term, has a lot of substance underneath it. The problem is we haven't gotten serious enough to get together to talk about what we mean by *World Christian*. What are some of the distinctively evident characteristics of being a World Christian in the missionary kid community? Let me give you some examples.

#### ***Characteristics of the MK as World Christian***

A characteristic of the overseas missionary child is a sense of extended family that goes even beyond blood lines. You've experienced it—Uncle Pete, Aunt Mary. It is representative of a third cultural context of the Christian in an internationalizing world.

Another characteristic is the loyalty to Christian values, even above social pragmatics. These are characteristics of the internationalizing community of Christ that may very well, in this increasingly shrinking world, become characteristic of the church in general in the twenty-first century. One of my propositions is that the missionary kid of the nineties will be the prototype of the Christian of the twenty-first century.

We're coming to understand now that people don't move out of their nation, get educated, and then come back home again. Missionaries haven't quite come to grips with this. People who get higher levels of education generally don't "go home again" in the old-fashioned sense of going back to their own community and their own people. They become part of an internationalizing set of people.

Many of the people reading this article may have originally gone into missions for a three- to five-year stint. However, now, even if they were to leave missions, they would probably remain in some kind of international community, in some kind of international work. This is a very important transformation occurring in modern societies.

The Peace Corps veterans who were strongly in demand in the late sixties and seventies have largely disappeared because of the de-emphasis of later administrations on the Peace Corps. Therefore, the MK commun-

ity once again may become the popular source for internationalists to take responsibilities overseas.

There's a vacuum in the world that can be filled by MKs who are freed by their parents and by their communities to be whatever it is that God wants them to be. More important, the World Christian as a cultural model can be founded and grounded in Romans 12. First we see the image there of the living sacrifice. But then we see the qualitative descriptions: not egocentric; not ethnocentric; transformed, not conformed; and committed to a body-life concept of community.

Could that be characteristic of the global Christian community in the twenty-first century? I believe so. The problem is that missions are in transformation. Mission strategies are changing. The nature of the missionary vocation is changing. A career missionary today does not get buried in China at age forty-seven under great mounds of Chinese soil. He gets buried at age forty-seven at a North American mission office desk under mounds of paper.

The problem is that we see the cracks. We see the flaws. We're aware that there are real problems in the missionary community today. Let's back off and look at the bigger picture. Sure there are problems. Sure there are cracks and flaws; but God is in control. God is doing God's thing. It is our stubbornness that insists on being able to see every step ahead of time. Again, that is a very Western value.

The sad fact is that most North American churches, mission-supporting churches, are painfully monocultural. They need your help to get out of that. Wow! What thirty thousand MKs could do to help transform those churches!

Once upon a time a marvelously wise man who was culturally flexible, who knew how to work in that second context and third context, said these words, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself willingly a slave to everybody to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. To those who were under the law I became like one under the law. To those not having the law I became one not having the law, so as to win them. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak." Here's the ultimate statement of third context flexibility: "I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this for the sake of the gospel, so that I

may share in its blessings." That's what I mean by the MK as the prototype of the twenty-first century Christian.

Would that we would integrate our Christianity in the whole of our experience. Being a Christian is ultimately is cultural matter, not just an other-worldly experience. We need to synchronize our families, our communities, and our schools to this culture three, the context of Christian internationalism.

### ***Role of the Schools***

Schools need to carefully articulate what it is that parents are and who it is that parents are becoming. There is no excuse for any institution allegedly serving missions to make things harder for missionaries or for missions. I am weary of the stories of last minute teachers arriving in a state of real shock within cultural enclaves, attempting to teach children and projecting racist overtones. MKs deserve better. Missionaries must demand better. And God's name must be better served.

### ***Faults in "Christian" Education***

There are four faults in much that passes as Christian education that Christian education should come to grips with.

***Ethnocentrism*** is a kind of learning impairment. If you knew you were doing something to kids that was making it harder for them to read, you would do something about it. Ethnocentrism makes it harder for kids to learn from the environments in which they live. It's a learning impairment. We ought to recognize it and put our heads together on it.

***Fear of the unknown*** produces hostility and anger and a lot of other nonproductive fruits that are hardly fruits of the Spirit. We need to help people with fear.

***Superiority syndrome*** is the notion that our way is the best way. It is not the way of Christ. Helping children see how much better they are than their fellows and their siblings is no way to encourage them. Most of us as parents know that, but we turn around and do it in our communities.

***Social distance and isolation.*** We can learn to accept culture as an encounter, a walk of life, dynamic and changing; can learn and teach the skills of learning culture; and can learn not to fret over whether or not I

want my kid to marry a national. That's a secondary question, and if it becomes an obsession early in life, it guarantees negative outcomes. Furthermore, it guarantees putting children into school environments that are totally separated from the societies in which they're living. The Christian community needs to develop support structures that make real the international nature of the community of Christ.

We need to relate acceptingly, in the spirit of the Gospel, to people to whom we are ministering even though their ways seem culturally alien from ours. Our good Lord was criticized for keeping company with people of a culture that was unfitting in the eyes of the Pharisees. "You hang around with these publicans and sinners and fallen women and all the rest of the rabble." And Jesus replied, "I have come for that purpose."

Do we need research in this field? Yes, I think we do. We need a better understanding of our context, and a clearer understanding of ourselves and of the dynamics that impact MKs because of who we are. Do we need analysis? Yes, I think so, because to see more clearly is to be better in touch with realities and better able to cope. Respect and perspective are keys to Christian development.

Having said that, I am very much afraid that a preoccupation with diagnostics and therapies can get us into a great deal of trouble. We need to think bigger than the MK as our unit of analysis in the first place. We need to look beyond our schools and our families. We need to look at the whole nature of the Christian community in a given context and all that it can be for the glory of God. Anxious parents, defensive schools, isolated communities—these can be made over to the glory of God.

We are the people of hope. I Corinthians 13:13 is still there, and our major strength lies in that word *hope*. It sits between faith and love. The greatest of these is love. Indeed, in the genius of the gospel, that's the crux of it. But in the serving of communities of Christ, we must be careful to keep the centerpiece, hope, in its place. Growing up as an MK should always be approached by any of us—parents, professionals, community members—in terms of its positive values, especially in light of the needs of a world in which Christians with global interests, concerns, and competencies will serve well their reigning Lord and Master.

Based on a presentation given at ICMK Quito, January 1987.

## 9.

*Transitions and The TCK***Jean M. Larson**

David Pollock<sup>1</sup> speaks about transition as a five-phase process. His model, used here in the context of the Third-Culture Kid,<sup>2</sup> is useful in much more varied applications. The transition process follows the same progression whether an individual is leaving school, moving from job to job or town to town, entering the military, starting retirement, or even for those who are saying good-bye to a dying loved one. Pollock, who travels internationally, has used the matrix with diverse audiences such as people in missionary orientation and people coming out of the prison system.

***Introduction***

Life is constantly changing, and change precipitates transition. The nomadic lifestyle of Third-Culture Kids (TCKs), with its cycles of moving, necessitates many transitions. First, there is the move from home country to the country of service. For some, because of parents' work assignments, there is moving from country to country. There can be moving from town to town within the country of service; there may also be a boarding school or international school to attend, holding the possibility of children moving away from home and far from parents. Then there is home leave, uprooting the family from the country of service to spend time recuperating in the home country. The cycle may then repeat itself.

Transition cycles for the TCK have two important overlays to consider: high-frequency mobility and the transcultural experience. The continuous challenge of changing cultures, with differing cues and relationships is coupled not only with their own mobility, but also with the mobility of other cross-cultural sojourners—friends and acquaintances. These people may be on a different cycle, but their lives have intersected for a span of time. This high-frequency mobility produces a continual need for readjustment in order to cope with its kaleidoscope of change. The resulting lifestyle is extremely intense.

Missionary children's (MKs') successful adjustment to a new situation has to do with four elements or cornerstones. First, *parental*

*relationships*. Their parents' world view and their relationship to each other have a profound influence in the MK's development and subsequent adjustments. Very important are the parents' perception of God, their relationship to the mission organization, their co-workers, the culture in which they are working, and then to each other. This means their style of showing affection, their problem-solving techniques, their style of sharing responsibilities, and their use of leisure time. Parents are charged with the responsibility to "train up a child in the way he should go." What takes place in the family sets the course for what will continue to be.

Second is how the *child perceives he or she is valued*. Note that whether or not the child actually is loved and valued is not the issue; the working word here is "perceives." Parents need to affirm their love for the child and their value of him or her in such a positive way that the child cannot fail to understand. The most obvious way is to simply verbalize this—and often. Strengthen and confirm this spoken word by spending unhurried time with the child; play with her, listen to him, and allow them to voice opinions and help in decision-making about transitions.

Next, the child needs to *perceive what the parent(s) are doing as something valuable*. How the parents approach their life and work is a model from which MKs will choose elements for their own lives. If parents are perceived as doing meaningful work and contributing to worthwhile things, the child can better understand the need for, and make a better adjustment to, any given transition this work may necessitate.

And, finally, *practical and persistent faith*. Faith is not necessarily a given for the child. A parent's persistent faith provides a hopeful perception of life for the child, both in a general way and in particular circumstances. Balance between a faith that "God will provide" and "God enables us to help ourselves" encourages practical adjustment to circumstances. Also, whether transition can be seen as something hopeful is quite dependent on the parents' approach.

Dr. John Powell<sup>3</sup> indicates that MKs' chances of successful transition are heightened when family support, allowing the child to "process" is also present. Processing involves the elements of talking, feeling, thinking, sharing with others, understanding, and finding

meaning in the change. Allow your MK to experience, express, and process his or her feelings about any transition. If this goes well, then he or she can move into the re-engagement stage and move on with that period of life. If children are unable to come to terms with a change, any later transition—particularly a move or a change in relationship, job, or responsibility—may cause them to go through a similar pattern of anxiety, fear, uncertainty, and loneliness again. It takes some people a long time to learn to cope with change in an adequate way. On the positive side, however, people who understand and accept change, and have had the opportunity to process, have much less difficulty in their subsequent moves and transitions.

People experiencing change undergo a five-phase transition process.<sup>4</sup> Most people are unaware of these phases and one can certainly go through any transition experience without being aware of the process, but it is helpful to understand the dynamics. Understanding the phases, along with their accompanying signs, changes, and expected behaviors, can be helpful in preparing an individual or a family not only to cope with their transitions but actually to flourish in the midst of them. Note that each of the transition phases has a “time orientation” which accompanies it. This is an indicator of mental activity on the part of participants in transition—for example, engaged in and thinking of the *present* or more oriented toward and thinking about the future. To further help the reader understand the dynamics of transitions, a hypothetical TCK family has been created, and brief illustrations show how their lives are affected by each of the five phases in the process.

### ***The Anthony Smith Family***

Anthony and Milan Smith have been married for twenty years. For the last thirteen years, they have been involved in mission work overseas. They have two children: Sam, 16, a high school junior, and his thirteen-year-old sister Sarah, in eighth grade. Their dog Shadow has been part of the family for five years.

### ***Phase 1: Engagement***

This is also sometimes called *Involvement*. Persons and families in this stage are settled in, part of a group where they know and are known by almost everyone. They know the routines, what to expect, and how to act. They know the social cues. They belong to various groups: school, church, work, and play. Information of a personal nature is often shared or known. One also has access to each group’s “inside information.” This may mean knowing a vocabulary of workable words (or language) useful only in that setting. The time orientation for *Engagement* is the present; people at this stage are psychologically present-oriented.

Adults in the engagement phase usually assume a position of responsibility in a work setting. Children are also given responsibility for tasks as they become able, whether putting out the hymnals for evening devotions or setting the table every noon for the family. As they grow older, it may mean cooking certain meals, coordinating something for their class, taking part in sports, or becoming a class officer. Being part of such a community of people gives a feeling of comfort, security, trust, and responsiveness. The result is a strong sense of belonging and commitment. This is what is meant by engagement; it is such a natural occurrence that most people fail to think about it.

### ***The Smith Family: Engagement***

Anthony Smith is district missionary pastor in Africa. He visits several towns, and routinely holds worship services in each, with communion. He knows the names of most of the worshipers; they all know him. Periodically he also visits a country market, holds a service, and sells books. The country folk there know him by name as well, and they look forward to this visit. He loves his work.

Milan sometimes accompanies Anthony. She has long since been well settled into their wood-frame mission station home. She knows the local market and stores well, can find what she needs, and is comfortable asking for help when she doesn’t. Milan is well acquainted with her neighbors; they enjoy sewing and drinking tea together. She belongs to a book club in the nearby large city, where expatriate wives meet once a month to discuss a book. Milan also belongs to her local Ladies’ Aid

group, and is now comfortable enough in the language to take her turn leading Bible Study. She helps with their fund-raisers, and helps to visit the sick and the new mothers. Milan also has time for calling on and receiving friends, inviting folks for meals, remembering birthdays, writing home, and helping her two children with their school interests. She feels settled in her routine. So do the children.

Sam and Sarah attend local schools. English is taught as a second language, and they both engage in sports and recreation with friends in the national language, which Sam learned at a young age and Sarah has grown up with. Their friends are locals. They both do well in school and like it. Sam is on the soccer team. He and his friends ride bike freely around town, and play ball in the fields. They fish in the nearby lake.

Sarah spends most days with her friend, Rajelima. They run between their two homes, helping mothers in the kitchen, making treats, working together on homework, thinking about the Fall Mountain Race, and giggling about boys. Both Sam and Sarah look forward to their family's annual vacation in the mountains, where they camp. Shadow romps around the fenced yard or sleeps, and sometimes goes fishing with the boys. He doesn't bark much, as he recognizes everyone in the neighborhood. In this stage, the Smith family feels accepted, secure, confirmed. They are *involved* or *engaged*.

### ***Phase II: Leaving***

The second phase often begins as soon as one is aware of an upcoming change, or when a big move is known much ahead of time, say, six months prior to actually leaving. If phase one is *engagement*, then phase two is really the *disengagement*. It is characterized by a loosening of ties, distancing from people, and disengagement from responsibilities. Therefore, it affects not only the person making the transition or change, but also those who will be left behind.

It is a time of farewells and closure, with feelings of excitement and anticipation, but also sadness, rejection, and denial. The time orientation for participants at this stage is not so much in the present, but in the future, and it is temporary. A note should be made here that in

evacuations this phase is eradicated, and often becomes an issue at a later date.

### ***The Smith Family: Leaving***

Anthony Smith received word last week of a re-assignment to the Seminary on the coast, where he will teach. He is delighted at the new opportunity and is looking forward to the challenge. As he goes into the country, he feels sadness that he will no longer be ministering to these people. However, he decides to ask the catechist to preach and lead worship in two of his towns. He feels less inclined to linger at the market and less eager to do favors. The people wonder why.

Milan is happy for her husband Anthony, but is sad to leave her friends and the people at church. It is difficult to tell them she'll be leaving. When she does, she notices that they don't invite her to help them plan the next fund-raising event, and some of them seem cool in their relationship now. She will especially miss the expatriate wives' book club. They hold a surprise going away party for her. Milan is busy thinking about sorting and packing, wondering what they will do with Shadow, what to do with excess furniture, and whether she should have a sale.

Sam and Sarah learn of their father's re-assignment. The first reactions are those of denial and sadness, "Oh, no! Not on the coast!" "I won't be here for my senior year! I'll not be on the soccer team!" "I'll have to leave my friend, Rajelima! Where will we be going to school? We won't be here for the Fall Mountain Race!" Notice how Sam and Sarah try to deny their leaving, yet at the same time look to their future, seeing what that would mean for them and their lives.

Once one learns of an upcoming change, one's mind more and more focuses on what that will mean for the future in terms of living, working, schooling, making friends, shopping, cooking, recreation, sports and politics. And as one ponders a future change (whether a two-week vacation, having a baby, or moving to a different town or country), one begins to make tentative plans: what to pack, what to give away, buying necessities, making little notes about people or services to notify. As people begin to engage in this process of "future thinking," they begin to

disengage or pull away from the present tasks and community of people. Likewise, their friends and colleagues began to disengage from them as well. Emotional disengagement usually precedes actual physical leaving.

Sam finds he is less interested in finishing his school yearbook, and is sometimes left out when the boys ride their bikes to fish. Sarah and Rajelima continue to spend time together, but now begin to find little irritating things about one another, a phenomenon that often happens at this stage. Even Shadow notices the changes in family routine and becomes less passive. He barks more now.

### **“RAFT” Technique for Good-byes**

At this stage, every effort should be made to assist personnel to properly relinquish their roles and responsibilities, reconcile all interpersonal conflicts, express proper farewells to people and places, reaffirm relationships, and develop realistic and positive expectations for the new assignment. David Pollock’s *R-A-F-T* technique, a useful tool in making satisfactory good-byes, and often presented by him and others in seminars on transition, facilitates remembering what needs attention:

***R is for Reconciliation.*** People have a need to try to make peace with others. Ask others for forgiveness for anything they may hold against you, whether you are aware of anything or not. Christians have some instructions on this subject from Jesus, in Matthew 5:23ff. It is easy to feel relief if one is leaving a bad situation or unfriendly neighbors. However, if one leaves without trying to make some peace, that memory persists as a burden, sometimes called an “invisible backpack.” This contributes to a less-than-totally-satisfactory closure to their leave-taking experience. People need good closures in order to make good entrances into the next set of experiences. This seems to be of vital importance to people who are dying. Sometimes they hold off dying, waiting for an estranged child to appear, in order to make some amends. It helps to create a peaceful conclusion to this phase.

***A is for Affirmation.*** It’s telling people what they mean to you and thanking them. This can be done either in writing or in person. People

respond very positively to being thanked, often thanking you for thanking them! It serves to put smiles on faces and leaves everyone feeling better. While Pollock’s Transition Seminar was originally developed for people making the large transition of crossing cultures and countries, such as missionary families, his *R-A-F-T* technique is also a helpful tool for anyone making various good-byes during their lifetime.

***F is for Farewells.*** Remember not only to say good-bye to people, but to places, pets, and possessions. Make good-byes to pets special; be certain to assure young children that they—the children—will accompany you to the new destination. In a child’s mind, a pet is part of the family, and if one leaves a pet behind or gives it away, the young child may feel uneasy about who in the family will be next. Verbalizing what will take place will allay many fears. Make time for visiting special places one last time. Parents should be alerted to allow children to make some decisions about what possessions are special to them, in order to take along at least some of those. Take photos of people, places, pets, and possessions. Allow for spontaneous “fun breaks” as a stress reliever for the whole family. A safe rule of thumb at this time: when things get hectic, spend more time, not less, in face-to-face activities with children. Give extra hugs. All this will pay off in the long run.

***T is for Think ahead.*** Rehearsal for change is an important preparatory step. Think about, and perhaps even make lists of your expectations of the future. Express excitement over anticipated pleasures. Acknowledge grief and sadness in leaving. A list of things you will miss, or discussing these with the family, allows you to grieve the losses along with looking forward to new things to be gained. Use role play instead of talk with small children.

### **Phase III: Transition**

“*Transition* begins at the point of physically leaving and ends when you ‘unpack your mind,’” according to Pollock.<sup>6</sup> Generally characterized by chaos, the heart of transition usually contains grief from losses, lack of structure both in schedule and task expectations, exaggeration of prob-

lems, ambiguity, and lack of status. Comfort and stability can be provided through clear communication of expectations, expression of questions and fears, and maintenance of rituals and practices. Arrival in the new situation should be planned to assure a positive and secure initial period with understanding people. Time orientation in the midst of transition is heavily leaning toward the future. Persons involved in the transition now think of and long for the future, when things will once again be back to normal for them.

### ***The Smith Family: Transition***

The Smith family is experiencing their last week in their old place, and they are nearly ready to leave. Each family member is sad to leave friends and known routines, but looks forward to the move. Those who drop by for a last farewell, even the dear friends, have almost begun to feel like an annoyance. The usual routines have stopped for all of the Smiths now. Each has begun to feel like the proverbial “duck out of water.” Others around them continue on with their daily lives; their own lives are upset and upsetting because it is hard to find clothes and other needed items in their packed boxes. The parents have done a good job in allowing their children to express sadness, and have listened to their fears about what the future holds as well as sharing some of their own. Sarah is having dreams in which she is missing arms or a leg, and Milan assures her that dreams of loss often happen to people in transition. One of the saddest things for the family is that they have to leave Shadow behind because of uncertainty about keeping him where they are going. They’ll live in an apartment which they will locate after their arrival on the coast.

Meanwhile, the seminary has temporary housing for them. Anthony knows that he will have to use a different dialect of the language he’s been using in the country, and that will be an adjustment. He’s also realizing he knows “country things” which will be of no use in the city. He is aware of this because he still remembers hearing about “special knowledge without use” in an orientation seminar as they were getting ready to leave the United States the first time.

Anthony also knows that they can expect any smaller problems to be exaggerated as they enter this phase of transition. He knows, too, that their sadness is proof they have made good friends and attachments (and

can do it again). He remembers hearing about emotional instability at this stage; therefore, he and Milan don’t get upset with Sam’s outbursts and Sarah’s complaints of minor stomachaches. They all are feeling a little emotional at this point. They each struggle with fears and apprehension regarding what is still unknown about their future, as well as the sadness of good-byes, loss of routine, and the disorientation of not being able to find their things. And now, they just want to “get on with it,” knowing departure is inevitable.

### ***Phase IV: Entering***

The shaky first steps of settling into a new situation require the use of observation and learning skills. Most TCKs are good observers, and have an advantage in that they can sit back and watch before taking risks with the new behaviors which new situations sometimes demand: new customs, new cues and responses. Youth and adults alike feel vulnerable, uncertain and marginal at this point.

A catchy motto for this phase could be “Get mentoring for entering.” With all the changes required, everyone in this phase needs a trustworthy, positive mentor who can answer questions, give advice, and appropriately intervene—a guide to interpret others’ behavior signals, and to help prevent errors made in response. This is especially important when crossing or mixing cultures. The time orientation for this step has now switched back to the present, as each participant puts attention to the task of adjustment. This entering phase normally takes going through a normal life cycle of a year. After that, it usually needs at least six more months for each individual family member to integrate and feel comfortable in their new situation.

### ***The Smith Family: Entering***

Anthony and Milan Smith realize it will take much hard work to establish new friendships, both for themselves and for the children. They have been through this before, when they first arrived in this new country. Anthony remembered someone saying that when entering a new situation, one needs a good mentor because of the uncertainty of your position. Prior to moving, he and Milan made inquiries about possible

mentors for Sam and Sarah, as well as educational opportunities for the children.

The parents know that their family, as the newcomers, will need to take the initiative in finding friends by being outgoing and friendly. The family is, however, feeling much the way they did in the leaving phase. As they were preparing to leave, friends and colleagues began excluding them because they would no longer be part of things in the future. Now, in the midst of “entering,” they again experience feelings of being excluded. This is normal when people are not yet sufficiently acquainted with their new situation to be fully integrated into it.

Most people in this phase hope for others to rush up and be genuinely welcoming, and sometimes this happens in real life. People who are totally engaged in their own lives and activities usually are not actively looking for new friends. Milan and Anthony have been forewarned about the exceptions.

They may be either “renegade” types or “loners.” These renegades are actually still looking for friends. They are people who have been present long enough to be part of the establishment, but who are not completely integrated into the established group and activities. They are still on the periphery because their behavior is not totally acceptable or conforming to the established community. Sam and Sarah’s parents have explained this to them, and the children are old enough to understand they are vulnerable at this point and need to be alert so as not to be taken in by undesirable friends. Missionary children, by virtue of having grown up in an environment of trusted people, especially need to be forewarned regarding this phenomenon!

The whole Smith family is very fortunate because there is a European family at the Seminary who has been recommended to them, and they have made contact. The Europeans have a son the same age as Sam, and two daughters, one a year older than Sarah and the other two years younger. They speak English as a second language. The children will all attend the same international school, and the European kids will help to introduce the Smith children to appropriate friends.

Sam can try out for the soccer team and is hopeful he will be accepted. Sarah is looking forward to meeting the two girls. The

European woman will take Milan to the seminary wives’ group and introduce her. The European man will befriend Anthony and show him around the Seminary and make introductions. The Smith’s “entering” phase now seems very hopeful. They all have people “mentoring for entering.”

### ***Phase V: Re-Engagement***

*Re-engagement* in a position of belonging and involvement is a conscious choice, characterized by a willingness to accept people and situations as they are, to participate in new relationships, and a commitment to serve in the new setting. It is also most helpful—a turning point—to recognize that it is not disloyal to one’s former circumstance to enjoy one’s present situation. Finding a support group of people who have shared the transition experience can be a stabilizing factor at this point.

### ***The Smith Family: Re-Engagement***

The Smith family is now feeling settled. While still grieving the loss of some former friendships, and certainly missing their dog, Shadow, they have found the Europeans to be great friends. Also, each family member has found other new friends within their various groups. They are involved, and committed to their responsibilities. They feel intimate, secure, and affirmed. Once again, they have “status”: they know personal information about others and personal information is known about them. They know where they “fit” within their groups of friends and acquaintances. Their behavior is conforming to the group, and they once again have both the time and energy to have concern for others.

At this point people in transition are free to be asked, and to volunteer their time and energy. The time orientation for this fifth stage of transition continues to be the present, but now it takes on a permanent nature, which will last until the next significant change for the participants. Then this fifth phase becomes phase one of the new transition cycle.

### Conclusion

To briefly re-cap the five-phase guide to the dynamics of transition: *Engagement* is first, and people feel very much settled; then there is *Leaving*, accompanied by an unsettled feeling, a “leaning away” and good-byes. The actual *Transition* is next, and is best described by one word: chaos. There is a lot of anxiety and lack of status and structure at this point. But shortly thereafter comes the *Entering*, with its resettling (and its search for mentors). Once the entering phase is accomplished, however long it takes, there is *Re-Engagement*, where one feels settled once again, with status, intimacy, and commitment.

These are the five phases of the transition experience, a *predictable* and *very normal* process. Being aware of the dynamics provides one with preparedness training for facing change —“forewarned is forearmed.” This is an excellent working model. Its five stages provide a framework into which most of life’s transitions fit. It is also a useful tool for understanding our own and others’ behavior during change, and therefore is helpful in honing skills to navigate the transitions we all continue to experience throughout life.

### Notes

1. David C. Pollock, Executive Director, Interaction, Inc., Houghton, New York.
2. Term coined by Dr. Ruth Hill Useem, Professor Emeritus, Sociology, Michigan State University. Definition by David Pollock: A Third-Culture Kid (TCK) is an individual who spends a significant part of his or her developmental years in a culture other than his or her parents’ passport culture, and develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into his or her life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience. This group of similar-experience people is referred to as the “third culture” of TCKs. Used in Mr. Pollock’s seminars.
3. John Powell, Professor Emeritus, Psychology and Counseling, Michigan State University. Presentation at ICMK Quito, January 1987.

4. David C. Pollock, Interaction, Inc., Houghton, New York. Five-Phase Transition Dynamics. From his seminars; used by permission.
5. David C. Pollock, “Exit Right, Enter Right,” *World Report*, April 1991. RAFT Technique used by author’s permission.
6. David C. Pollock, personal communication.

## 10.

*Preparing Children for Missionary Life*

**Sandra D. Wright with Paul E. Nelson**

When a couple makes the decision to pursue cross-cultural ministry, every member of the family is affected, usually for a lifetime. For that reason, overseas preparation must address the unique challenges faced by each family member as well as the whole family unit. Hardly anyone would disagree with that lofty ideal. But how does one translate that ideal into a coherent program that addresses the complex interpersonal and intercultural issues in age-appropriate and relevant ways?

Including children in a candidate orientation program presents some problems. Thus, many mission agencies continue to focus their pre-field training efforts on adult candidates and relegate the children to caring people who can keep them occupied. Some missions make few exceptions to their policy of requiring parents to leave their children with relatives or friends while they attend the candidate orientation program. Other missions have children accompany their parents but make inadequate provision for their needs, thus finding it almost impossible to keep parents engaged. If these policies are going to change, mission administrators need to see viable family orientation programs in operation that are really making a difference.

The challenge of effective pre-field preparation for families lies not in recognizing the importance of preparation for children, but in finding ways to implement a viable program. The process of meeting that challenge can begin with an examination of some commonly held assumptions about missions, MKs, and missionary families.

It is assumed that “missionary” is a role filled by an adult. Children accompany their missionary parents to the field. They may even be included as integral members of the missions community, but they are the primary concern of their parents rather than the agency. Most mission agencies organize themselves around the assumption that they are made up of adult missionaries with dependent children who need to be cared for and educated, but they are incidental to the “real work.”

In reality, missionary families function best in the unique role of reflecting God’s glory in a new culture when they function as “ministering units.”

*The relationship between family and the mission of the church is so intimate that each is enhanced by the other. Reflecting the Gospel’s power to transform people and to bring purposeful unity, the missionary family is an important part of the witness of the Word. Incarnation of Christ into family is central in the work and witness of the missionary. The Gospel is evident in the family’s redemptive responses to its own weaknesses and failures.*

*The unity for which our Lord prayed in John 17 begins in the missionary family and then works its way outward through the rest of the family’s ministry. (Sojourners, Rowan and Rowan, Associates of Urbanus, 1990)*

This vision elevates each member of the family to a central focus in the communication of the Gospel. In this context, children are more than dependents, or even elements in the team’s strategy to build relationships in the community. They are integral to fulfilling the ministry to which God has called their family. That fact alone warrants giving each person in a family the best preparation possible for the crucial role they will fill.

Another common assumption is that “kids will adjust,” especially when they are younger. “We don’t need to take on responsibility for something that will happen naturally.” Why is that believed so readily? From infancy a child is in a continual mode of learning—learning to walk, talk, identify people and things, learning right from wrong. Adjustment for a child is a constant. Since they are continually learning, “kids *do* adjust.” But, even a cursory understanding of early childhood development should cause us to question the cost and lifelong impact of the trial-and-error approach to the complexities of cross-cultural adjustment.

The experience of moving and learning to live in another culture greatly increases the amount of learning and stress that a child must go through. Helping children as well as parents develop ways to talk about their fears, their losses, their strategies for handling change, their trust in God, and dozens of other issues will contribute significantly to the overall effectiveness of that “ministering unit.” Sending organizations need to help every member of the family anticipate what they will experience in their new setting so they can align their expectations with reality.

Life's experiences are like a tapestry of interwoven threads. As one considers helping children prepare for radical change, it must be understood that the affective rather than the cognitive domain is in focus. These feelings, perspectives, and expectations are interwoven with each other and with concrete experiences creating a differing pattern for each member of the family. With children, the affective issues are not often considered until they hit a "snag" and there is a crisis. Preparation for each child will strengthen the "threads" and tighten the "weave" for the whole family. With the right kind of preparation, children can go through the upheaval of moving to and living in another country with fewer "snags" and actually grow in positive ways through the experience.

### **Personal Identity**

There are three essential areas in which the threads of pre-field preparation may be interwoven: *personal identity*, the *transition process*, and *unrealistic expectations*. As children grow in self-understanding, they are better able accept differences, develop relationships, respond to change, learn effectively, and grow through the experiences of living interculturally. Each child's unique development must be considered in the training process. Missionary children begin to understand their **personal identity** as they gain experience with the following issues:

- Understanding one's strengths and challenges: these affect the way a child relates to others and learns new things
- Understanding the way one learns best: knowing this can enable to plan ways they will learn about the new culture and language and choose from differing educational options
- Understanding what is personally important: some values will change and some will not change as a family enters a new culture
- Understanding how to respond to differences in others (outward appearance, way of doing things): it is important to approach differences with openness, a desire to learn, and an attitude of loving acceptance
- Understanding feelings: "How do I feel about going overseas? Both good and bad, at the same time?"
- Understanding how to enter another culture

### **Transition Process**

The second essential area to address in preparation for cross-cultural ministry is an understanding of the **transition process**. Each person will progress through the predictable stages of transition. Reactions to each stage will often differ for each family member. An understanding of where they are and the characteristics of each stage can help a child feel more secure and remain open to learning throughout the process.

As children respond to the various elements of change, it is helpful to look at some biblical examples of those who moved and lived in other cultures. Jesus, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Jonah, Ruth, Esther, Paul, and others provide familiar models for children. Issues to be addressed through the transition process are:

- Understanding the stages of change and assessing where one is in this process
- Learning about what makes up culture
- Developing strategies for dealing with cultural differences
- Exploring ways people learn in a new culture
- Anticipating ways one might handle frustration and stress that are magnified through cultural change
- Knowing how to say "good-byes" and "hellos"
- Recognizing the "unchangables" in the transition—the constants in the chaos

### **Expectations**

The third essential area is an objective evaluation of one's **expectations**. What does each child expect of this new world to which he or she is going? Knowing and modifying expectations ahead of time can lessen fears, motivate learning, and develop inner flexibility. Inner expectations are usually based on five things: (1) past experience, (2) current knowledge, (3) personal values, (4) needs and (5) desires. These are filtered through the affective screen of one's world view. It is fairly simple to filter concrete information regarding past experiences and current knowledge. However, helping children assess their inner expectations and helping them talk about what they are anticipating requires sensitivity. One must ask open, yet directive questions that can help the

child and parents identify what the expectations are and where they come from.

Once identified, a child should be helped to modify unrealistic expectations. One way to begin this change process is to work toward creating an environment in which children can hold their expectations lightly and be encouraged to remain flexible. In a safe environment like this, expectations can be modified as new information is gained. Listening to the “why’s” of a child’s expectation is critical in this process. Expectations that are unexamined and held tightly will often result in frustration and may lead to anger, resentment, and bitterness. “Hope (expectations) deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov 13:12). Children, even at an early age, can be helped to express and reshape their expectations.

The second element in helping children deal with unrealistic expectations is to learn specific information. For example, a child may have certain expectations about what school will be like. Based on past experience, he or she may expect to be in a class with children all the same age. If one schooling option is a small school in which there are several grades in a classroom, the child could visit that type of school here. This experience would help to mold a more realistic expectation.

Interconnected with each of these issues are the cross-threads of relationships and cultural understanding. Here is where the affective issues interact with life’s experiences, where choices are made, where inner character is revealed, and where “snags” occur. When children are asked what their greatest concern is about moving overseas, the overwhelming response is “friends.” Relationships with God, family, and friends are crucial for a child who is learning to live in a new culture and with a new language.

It is important to assess a child’s expectations of God throughout this new adventure. Parents and teachers can be encouraged to ask questions that will help the child talk about his perspective on God’s role in their transition. Children should also identify their expectations of themselves as they go through radical changes. Inner expectations have a great deal to do with the critical element of any relationship, *trust*.

In addition to these core pre-field issues, there are concepts that need to be addressed by each person at a level of abstraction appropriate to his or her developmental level. For example, an issue with which

everyone must deal is handling difference. A general objective might be to help people understand and respond positively to difference. The age-appropriate levels of understanding might be divided as follows:

Level 1: Discovering differences in the way people look (color of skin, clothing), *ages 2-3*.

Level 2: Developing acceptance and a positive attitude toward differences in appearance, language, and actions; *ages 4-6*.

Level 3: Identifying thought processes and value differences; *ages 7-12*.

Level 4: Understanding world view and problem-solving differences and how they are reflected in one’s actions; *teens*.

The difficulty in establishing objectives in affective areas is that the outcomes are somewhat abstract. How do you test the extent of an attitude change or a broadened world view? Nevertheless, it is essential that affective issues be addressed in a pre-field training experience. The true test of the results will come months or years later when the child has demonstrated real growth through the transition and is thriving in the overseas community.

### ***Designing a Program to Prepare Children***

Effective programs for preparing children for cross-cultural life grow out of the same objectives as those developed for adults. The key issues of effective ministry and how individuals relate to cultural change and relationships are relevant for every member of the family. With these objectives, age-appropriate experiential learning activities can be developed and implemented with insight and purpose.

Children will remember best what they have experienced, not just what they have seen or heard. Since most of the issues lie within the experience-based affective domain, they are more easily taught through interactive experiences. When well designed, these learning activities can give a concrete framework for abstract concepts.

For example, when teaching about building and breaking trust in relationships, an approach that may be used is building a structure block by block (*Jenga* or *Don’t Break the Ice* games). Each block represents something that builds a relationship such as kindness, sharing, honesty, and accepting another’s ideas. When one block at a time is taken out

(telling a lie, cutting words) the structure is weakened until eventually the “trust” is broken. Additional concepts may be taught by modifying this activity. Just as the threads of vital issues are interwoven throughout a person’s life, multiple themes and objectives are interwoven and may be covered in a single learning activity.

Prescriptive teaching keeps the child’s needs, development, personality, strengths, and challenges continually in focus. This perspective prepares teachers to adjust instruction to fit the student. It also gives flexibility for responding to teachable moments. In one program, a situation required the planned lessons to be set aside in order to deal with some interpersonal conflict. How appropriate, following a morning activity focused on trust building! The lesson for resolving conflicts was to be two days later. Instead the teacher and students were able to turn the potentially disruptive situation into a teachable moment.

“Stepping-stone” experiences can be set up to assist children in making the necessary gradual adjustments. Experiences such as hearing another language, figuring out the use or significance of artifacts from another country, or eating something never tried are all good examples. In a positive, emotionally safe environment, children are able to overcome some of their fears of the unknown, deal with conflicting feelings, practice culture learning strategies, and develop new mental “pockets” in which to put future cross-cultural learning.

One “stepping-stone” experience that has been used successfully is to take the children in the language learning program to a Chinese restaurant where one of the waiters speaks Cantonese or Mandarin. The children are given a few key phrases like “How do you say ...?” in the language, and strategies for asking questions. They are encouraged to order something they have never tasted before. This has proven to be one of the most feared, but also most positive, learning experiences.

Small “stepping-stones” are provided by debriefing children in short segments throughout the activity. It is helpful to put a short “insight phrase” such as “Laugh and Learn” (used when afraid of being embarrassed in trying something new) with key lessons which the children can quickly pull from memory when entering similar experiences.

The intercultural and missionary experience of a teacher adds valuable depth to this type of program, as children learn from the teacher’s

experience. Cultural flavor of the experiential activities can be based on the teacher’s background.

In a program with other children also preparing to go overseas, a great value is added by the interaction among them. Children learn from each other. Many of the relationship concepts can also be put into practice in living situations.

### *Family Preparation*

Many missionary parents ask, “What can I do to help my children prepare for our move?” Preparation for children is a process just as it is for adults. It cannot be completed, and certainly not guaranteed, in a single program. The sessions provide a foundation for learning on which other things can be built. Preparation of the family begins in the initial decision to serve God as a missionary family and continues through life’s experiences on and off the field.

Parents should realize that even before the final decision is made to move into another cultural setting, they have begun the preparation process for both themselves and their children. From that point on every part of their life is focused toward some phase of the preparation process.

Open communication with children plays a critical part in the way a family moves through this process together. Each member of the family has a vital part to play in a successful transition. Children often express valuable insight on what is happening if parents will take the time to draw them out. They also have the rich treasure of simple faith that moves mountains. From parents, children can learn how to deal with their own feelings as they go through the processes of leaving and transition.

Along with open communication, families need to encourage an openness to appropriate expressions of feelings. Children experience the same paradox of negative and positive feelings as adults—excited about going, sad about leaving. In their concrete world of right or wrong, it’s often difficult for children to understand how both can exist side by side and that it’s OK. Parents can use each event as a learning opportunity. The experiences of life set the stage for some of the best lessons. One young girl was getting very frustrated with another in the close living situation of a training program. The parents could have told the girls to stay away from each other, but instead they were able to use their

conflicts to teach them how to work through frustrations and personality differences in a close missionary community.

Preparation of the family also needs to have a structured element so that parents can target a full range of relevant issues. Ideally, you could plan to have a family night each week to which everyone is committed. Using the same process of developing objectives and creating experiential activities as explained above, parents can design a preparation plan for the family. Families that prepare together are better able to serve together because they have a common set of experiences and language to build mutual understanding during transitional stress.

Regardless of the idealized vision often cited, few families will be strengthened by living in a different culture. If the members of a family have not developed healthy relationships and reasonable ways to resolve conflicts in their home culture, it is unrealistic to expect those behaviors to emerge in the stressful context of an unfamiliar environment and even more complex relationships.

Comprehensive pre-field preparation must address the relationships and patterns of interaction a family usually follows. If the relationships are generally balanced and mutually affirming, each member of the family can be given resources and encouragement to continue meeting each other's needs and remain healthy in their new setting. If their relationships with one another are potentially detrimental to the growth of the family and they appear to have few viable strategies for coping with new stresses, it is critical that they be given resources and encouragement to establish new patterns before they leave for the field.

### ***Summary***

The life-changing decision to serve Christ in a cross-cultural ministry greatly impacts every member of the family. Children and adults both need to be prepared in critical affective as well as cognitive areas. Personal identity, the transition process, and expectations are the main elements. Through a well designed program that includes the entire family, parents as well as children will gain a heightened awareness of the issues each person is facing. This can provide the foundation needed to help guide each person as they are transplanted into a new culture. The family can be bonded through a unified strategy for living with the complexities of this new life. The open communication

and new insights that are inherent in carefully planned pre-field family activities can provide the foundation for the skills and attitudes for a resilient Christian family.

## 11. *Adventurer, Observer, Member: Helping MKs Appreciate Local Culture*

### Sally Jane Norton

Nine missionary kids sat around the breakfast table; all were elementary age. I asked, “What do your parents do to help you like Filipinos and being in the Philippines?” Without hesitation one after the other responded.

“We go interesting places like the beach and the mountains.”

“I go to Philippine school.”

“We eat Filipino food.”

“We speak Tagalog.”

“We speak Tagalog, Bicol, and English!”

“We go to Sunday school. Even though I don’t speak Tagalog, the children are friendly and they speak enough English. I have friends at church.”

“My friends live near my house. We play together.”

As quickly as they started they were gone. Breakfast consumed. Off to play.

How very simple: go places, eat local food, play, study, share the routines of life with those around you.

### *Our Family Experience*

My mind flashed back to my own experience in helping my children enter Philippine culture. After two weeks’ residence in the country we went on a field trip to another island and got stranded for extra days due to a typhoon and canceled airplane flights. I was a basket case. I hadn’t known what to expect and found the pastor’s home quite primitive.

Kerosene lamps and mosquito nets scared my two pre-school sons. By the third day, I did better with dipper baths, rice at all meals, and the staring eyes of neighbors. We all began to relax. At dinner time, my four-year-old came running, “Mommy, Mommy, we’re going to have a

cookout!” Suddenly Philippine life started to make sense in terms my son understood.

### *Member: A Bi-Cultural Son*

A few years later that same son thrilled American friends with tales of life in the barrio where he skinny-dipped in the river, ate roast dog, and hunted birds with a slingshot. He attended local school, learned the language within our first year, and shared his toys with all the neighbors.

As parents we had our challenges. Sometimes he would pit one culture against the other. One day, his father questioned him about something he had done. Smartly, he replied, “Shall I answer as an American or a Filipino?” Wisely, his father said, “As a Christian.” Trips to the city and time with American children were essential. At conference events he learned American games and how to follow Western directions.

As a family we read many children’s books, especially the classics. Because he was so submerged in Philippine culture, we had to work to keep the bridge to American culture open. We anticipated schooling in the future at the missionary children’s school, so consulted with them annually concerning our son’s social and academic progress. They became aware of the student they would be getting and we learned about our son’s needs. We became a team working together for the future.

My first child is my *bi-cultural* son. As an adult he still speaks the language, has an affinity with the Filipino people, and can move in and out of the culture at will.

### *Observer: A Third-Culture Kid*

My other son has a different story. He took his first walking steps on that early field trip. The Philippines was home. Although as a pre-schooler he spoke the language, home service in America at the age of five banished it from his mind. For first grade he went away to boarding school and came home on weekends. Life revolved around school and dorm friends. In elementary school national language classes and Sunday school at home with local children, he had impeccable pronunciation but the language never became his own. He understood

but chose not to use it. He always seemed to be a spectator. He understood what was going on but chose not to participate. He is my “third-culture kid” child. His greatest affinity is with others who are from one place, raised in another but part of neither. He knows how to move and live in the Philippines. He now lives in the United States without distress or discomfort. His best friends are other missionary kids or immigrants to America.

In contrast to his brother’s barrio tales, his stories are of dorm adventures, the hammock strung high in the sampalok tree, and exploring the caves of Corrigador. Same family, same culture and language exposure, different personality, different timing.

In working with children to facilitate their adjustment and participation in a culture, it is important to allow for individual differences. My family illustrates two different ways to culturally connect: bi-culturally and as a third-culture person. What are some other options for cultural relationships?

### ***Adventurer: Skilled at Entering***

Adventurer, sampler, or spectator are other descriptive terms. The adventurer is someone who tastes or samples aspects of a culture. He doesn’t really enter or become a participant but rather tries out various cultural experiences. Families that move frequently from one culture to another may identify with this description. They learn how to eat the food, how to make the bed, how to ride the local transportation, and how to speak a few phrases. They become skilled at entering a new place. They know where to go, what questions to ask, how to unlock cultural experiences. They, too, appreciate the life and peoples of a country. For any number of reasons, they do not stay more than a few years and then move on. An adventurer may use the culture for stimulating experiences but without settling into local life. A spectator watches from outside but doesn’t enter.

So what can parents, teachers, schools, and house parents do in the country of service to enhance the MKs’ appreciation of and connection with the local culture?

### ***Suggestions for Parents***

The age of entrance to a culture makes a difference. In the pre-school years, the parent’s security in the culture is paramount to enabling the children to enter. If the family can be learners together, likes and dislikes, joys and fears, can be safely expressed and explored. Some things don’t taste good the first time. In the safety of the family dinner table new tastes can be developed.

Freedom to use the language and try out phrases increases cultural comfort. Outside the home criticism may be harsh when language is misused. Home can be a safe haven for using one’s mother tongue and for experimentation with the new language. Remember to keep expectations reasonable. And remember children can be cruel. Avoid pushing your children beyond their comfort level. Lead them into new experiences. Increase their comfort level by going along and showing them how to participate.

### ***Suggestions for Teachers***

Once children are school age the role of parents changes. Teachers and peers spend more time with the child and they exert influence for good and bad. Teachers have a wonderful opportunity to open and expand a child’s world and experiences in the culture. Field trips to historical sites, cultural displays, and museums require only organizational skills and logistical arrangements. By developing an activity page for part of the day, student interest and involvement can be sustained.

Teachers should explore the site prior to the trip. By learning the limitations of the location and meeting local tour guides, teachers can develop realistic student expectations and prepare learning activities. Often the greatest challenge is learning the calendar of cultural events. Sometimes daily newspapers have cultural or entertainment sections. Another source to explore is the Department of Tourism or the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Embassy publications may include notices of special local events.

Another way to connect a class to the culture is through parents of the students. Learn about the diverse ministries and take time to visit

when possible. As knowledge grows one may capture your interest and serve as a tool for giving the class a cultural experience. Involve the parents in the planning and focus clearly on the objective of the experience.

Most cultures have formal programs of education. As a teacher, doors open for interaction with teachers in the host culture. Establish relationships that could lay the foundation for a cultural exchange. In the Philippines most public school classes are double the size of the MK school class. In working out an exchange fifteen Filipino students were selected to spend the day at the missionary school. Each MK student had a Filipino student assigned to them. They spent the day together in all the normal school routines and experiences.

Preparation before the experience included talking about how the MK school might be different and what help the Filipino child might need to be able to understand and do things our way. In return the fifteen children from the MK school spent a day at the Filipino school. This program was done on the elementary level by a single class, not the whole school.

A different kind of exchange has worked effectively at the middle school level (Grades 6 – 8). Arrangements were made with a host country elementary school for the middle school students to make a presentation (teach a lesson) in the classroom. Each English class developed a lesson they would teach to an elementary class. After the teaching experience the host class asked questions and talked with the visiting missionary students.

The Philippines lends itself to outdoor education camps. Middle school is a good age for a week away from school in a camp environment focusing on spiritual life, cultural experiences, and learning outdoors. Faith Academy rotates the venue on a three-year cycle between a volcano, a World War II historic island battleground, and a mountain city. Outdoor living skills, history, science, and handicrafts are always included. The camp atmosphere nurtures relationships between the teacher and his or her squad as they participate in a variety of activities and work together. This is the annual highlight of the middle school year.

In the missionary context where the parents of students serve God by helping and ministering to people, students can develop insensitive attitudes towards the needs of others. Middle school Bible class projects are a helpful tool for nurturing compassion. This is an age of great energy. The challenge is to find a physical project that can be completed in a limited time frame by a group of energized youth.

Projects taken on in recent years by middle schoolers include the building of a drainage ditch for a squatter community, making a playground in the center of a poor neighborhood, and teaching VBS one afternoon a week for one month. The teacher helped the students define their project, guided the fund raising, and worked closely with the students to see it completed.

High school students have different interests and needs. Those who have grown up in the culture can be an effective bridge of relationship for those who have arrived in the country during their high school years. Negative or positive attitudes toward the culture are rarely hidden or disguised. Ministry opportunities that grow out of needs in the community provide natural venues for cross-cultural interaction. Athletic competition with local teams creates a common playing field for meeting. The MK school may consider hosting a tournament that in addition to the schedule of games could include a youth rally, student music groups, performing, testimonies, and faculty giving a gospel message.

A faculty member with experience in Awana ministry began a Sunday morning Awana program for the local children living near the school. School families and students signed up to serve as the Awana staff. The program is run within the parameters of the school year and activity schedule. More than two hundred children attend and forty people serve as the staff, many of whom are high school students. Nine o'clock on Sunday morning it's an impressive sight with two hundred children walking off the hill wearing Awana tee-shirts and carrying their Bibles.

The high school co-curricular program provides other opportunities for cultural interaction. Gospel teams develop presentations for use in local schools and churches. Summer ministry teams provide one- to three- week opportunities away from the school. Sports evangelism gives athletes the chance to play as well as to witness for Christ. Physical

projects at orphanages, camps, and church buildings allow students to serve without requiring them to articulate their faith. Other students may be ready for the challenge of teaching vacation Bible school or counseling at camp. Training and preparation are crucial components of an effective experience. Even during the school year, a ministry day requiring the participation all high school students moves them into the community and into contact with nationals.

Teachers need to explore cultural opportunities that may enhance the curriculum and are unique to the cultural setting of the school. Structure research and comparative analysis projects utilizing the local context.

The social, economic, political, and scientific concerns of a nation can become content for skill development. An English teacher creatively used the English translation of a local novel to develop skills of analysis and literary interpretation. For the climax of the unit the class prepared a fiesta celebration similar to what they read about in the novel. The entertainment at the event included two nationals sharing how the study of that novel influenced their personal life. New connections were made with the culture as well as with two campus employees.

### ***Suggestions for Boarding Home Parents***

Boarding home parents have perhaps the greatest challenge in enhancing a student's appreciation of the culture. Divergent cultural experiences and home backgrounds come together under one roof. Certainly understanding each family and its ministry is an important step to building understanding. Praying daily for events in the ministry of parents is very important. Everyone in the home can share names and circumstances from the ministry life of each family.

When the national culture that surrounds the school is different from the culture the children call home, the boarding home parents are responsible to open doors of understanding. By having a Philippine dinner on a regular basis the students developed a taste for local food. The novelty of eating with fingers or chopsticks contributes to the experience. Special events that include local "treats" build appreciation for local culture. Students at one MK school couldn't wait to take a visiting missionary to the local eating hangout, treating her to unique foods and strange desserts.

In the boarding home setting more than elsewhere, different styles of cultural connectedness will be evident. Boarding home parents need to allow room for all to be comfortable and utilize the strengths of each to carry the others. If they are comfortable in the culture, weekend and holiday excursions into the countryside will be successful even if some of the students are not particularly excited.

Remember the reticence to participate may be more the type of activity than where or who it is with. Some people just don't like to camp—ever. Offering a wide variety of activities over the course of a year will demonstrate the leaders' understanding of differences. Students do better when they know the plan and expectations are clear. Even the expectation that something will go wrong that can help them deal with the experience should it occur.

The young elementary children said it well. Go places, eat local food, play, study, share the routines of life with those around you. The challenge is to continually expand one's contacts, knowledge, and relationships in the culture so that opportunities for connecting aren't missed.

## 12.

### *The Re-Entry Task*

**David C. Pollock**

“Missionary kids are just kids like everyone else.”

“All kids have difficult teachers and others who create stress.”

“In a mobile society, many people’s roots are torn up.”

“Many kids have to make adjustments—new home, new friends, new school. Why all the concern for MKs? They’ll adjust OK.”

It is true that we all make adjustments which, at a glance, seem similar. The difference between the adjustments made by most people and those made by MKs are in frequency, intensity and concurrency.

Life is a constant flow and repetition of adjustment for most MKs! They go to and from boarding school, making geographical changes within the same country, with the loss of their own room, favorite hideout, and special places to play and remember. Periodically, MKs are totally uprooted for an extended period of time to a place their parents call “home,” after which they return to what they consider home. And that return may be to a totally new location.

Even if MKs are not leaving, their friends are. An important, special relationship may be interrupted for one year by a furlough and extended to two years by the furlough of the friend’s family. Comings and goings of school staff and other missionaries add to the sense of impermanence. A grief process, in varying degrees, is the constant companion of the third-culture kid.

Not only are the adjustments frequent, but the intensity is exacerbated by several factors. Many of the leavings involve intimate relationships: parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, and special friends. For many, saying good-bye to go to boarding school at age ten parallels the experience of an eighteen-year-old departing for college. That person may never again really live with their parents for a protracted period of time. And, as a young child leaves the extended family at the conclusion of a furlough, the parting seems almost permanent. Four years of separation for an eight-year-old is half a life—almost forever.

The adjustments faced are often concurrent as well as multiple and intense. A good example is graduation from a boarding school. The end

of high school marks the separation from people who have become family—as brothers and sisters, not just schoolmates. It often marks an almost final separation from parents and physical family. It also means separation from nationals and a country that is home. It is the departure from a culture and a lifestyle where the person has come to belong and the entry into a new culture and lifestyle that may be very foreign.

At the conclusion of one of our re-entry seminars last summer, the group was saying teary good-byes. One girl from Japan said, “We get good at saying good-bye.” One young man who had been quite reserved and quiet during the week added, “But you never get used to it.” Somehow in that moment everyone sensed the uniqueness of always adjusting. This adjustment is often complicated by being inhibited in saying, “It hurts.” After all, how can you complain when you are doing it for Jesus?

My involvement with MKs began during my college years. Many of my friends were MKs or international students, and I observed their struggles as well as their victories. I was envious of their experiences and the knowledge, insight, and maturity they possessed, but I ached with them in the stress of their aloneness, disorientation, and pain. In the years that followed, counseling returned missionaries and MKs on college campuses became my concern. After three years in Kenya, I was convinced that effective assistance could and should be given to missionary families.

### *Comfort and Intelligent Care*

There are three basic reasons for pursuing this care in the MK community. The first is sufficient in itself: missionary kids *are*. Their very existence as part of the body of believers is sufficient mandate to care for them in “bearing one another’s burden and thus fulfilling the law of Christ.” The second reason is that the missionary enterprise is deeply affected by the needs of MKs. Family concerns account for a significant number of ministry problems and service terminations. The third reason is that within the MK community lies great potential for leadership in missions and the world in general.

Two basic issues must be addressed in putting the re-entry task into proper perspective. First, the MK’s potential must be developed throughout early years and care must be given for its release. Second, part of the release of one’s potential is addressing problems through proper comfort

and intelligent care. These problems are not all extreme or crippling, but they can hinder the realization of one's potential.

The re-entry (entry adjustment) of MKs is not an event but a process. Many people and agencies touch them at key points throughout their lives and can be given assistance to do it correctly. Prior to overseas service, parents' attitudes and skills can be developed to prepare them for the task of raising their children overseas. Caregivers such as teachers and dorm parents can be prepared for their tasks. MKs can be prepared for their first major adjustment experience in overseas living.

While overseas, parents, school personnel, and a variety of others influence MKs. Attitudes and actions shape MKs' God-view, self-view and world-view. Expectations develop which promote either a positive view of the future or a bleak, negative one. A truly caring community, encompassing the church, school and family, contributes significantly to an MK's positive development and re-entry capabilities.

### ***The Shock of Re-Entry***

It is generally accepted among cross-cultural trainers that individuals who adjust best in a new culture have the greatest difficulty re-entering their own. Often the third-culture kid has entered the "other" culture at a stage in life when adaptation was most easily made (if, in fact, he wasn't born there) and exits at a far more difficult point in life, as an adolescent.

For many MKs, the re-entry experience is really more "entry" than re-entry. Having spent many of their developmental years in a culture other than their own, TCKs have a sense of relationship to both host and home cultures, but lack a sense of full membership in either. However, the most important factor is that a major adjustment is made as a part of the developmental process.

There are a variety of views on the shock of re-entry. Some see the experience as a prelude to adjustment, during which time the person tends to be bewildered, confused, lonely, and defensive. An emerging view is that the learning-growing developmental process is intensified and accelerated. The cycle of adjustment is an experience followed by reaction, then reflection, and finally conceptualization; then a return to experience. It is the learning process in microcosm.

At the core of the process is the transition experience itself. Like the small end of a funnel, it is a process through which one may quickly pass, but it is also possible to become stuck or at least delayed in passing.

The individual starts at a point of engagement. There is commitment to the group and a sense of belonging. The person has status and a sense of knowing what to expect and how to respond. As the time of leaving approaches, there are changes in attitudes and certain activities designed to disengage one from relationships. There is a denial of sadness, rejection, and guilt. Farewells are part of the leaving.

The heart of transition is characterized by a sense of chaos. Structure is lost, problems are exaggerated, and the ability to understand and respond appropriately to input may be greatly impaired. A loss of status, sense of grief, emotional instability, and an exaggerated importance of "special" knowledge, accompanied by a sense of isolation, anxiety, and self-centeredness, are typical transition experiences.

These precede the entering stage, where the individual begins to establish new relationships. He is uncertain of whom to trust but needs a mentor, and will often act in an exaggerated way, running risks and behaving in abnormal fashion to establish some point of acceptance and belonging. During this period, attitudes and relationships are formed that result in either healthy or unhealthy adjustment and development.

### ***Re-Entry Care***

During the re-entry transition the cross-cultural sojourner may need special care to enable proper adjustment. The re-entry facilitator plays the role of a midwife—not the cause of the birth, or responsible for the ultimate outcome of the birth, but supporting the person through the trauma of transition. Admittedly, re-entry care is limited in its total impact. In a short period of time, one cannot undo the past or structure and guarantee the future. But much can be done to help the sojourner maintain equilibrium, learn basic data, and set the stage for continuing development. The extent of positive impact is usually tied to the continuation of the flow of care.

According to Dr. Richard Brislin, a major element of re-entry preparation is doing the "work of worry." He said, "When people prepare for unpleasant, aversive events that could occur in the future, the impact

of those adverse events is much less severe than if people did not prepare.” (Richard Brislin, “Can They Go Home Again?” *International, Educational and Cultural Exchange*, 1974, 9(4), pp. 19-24.)

The work of worry means recognition of the likelihood of certain experiences so that plans can be made to deal with them properly. Jesus helped the disciples do the work of worry when in he said in John 15:

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.... You do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.... Remember my words, “No servant is greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

James picks up the theme in his letter when he says:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Peter captures the concept in his epistle when he says, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.”

Each of these warnings is accompanied by two important elements: the end product is positive maturing and growth; and Christ is always with us. Scripture indicates that the experiences are valuable and the resources are available.

Avoiding being surprised by the events of transition involves thinking through the event and one’s resources. In the process of re-entry, an individual can estimate the probability of certain difficulties and prepare for them by discussing resources and options. He or she is then in a position to plan a course of action, including how to recover from a particular difficult or confusing situation.

### **Timing and Scope**

Views of when and how re-entry care should occur vary from pre-departure workshops through re-entry seminars upon arrival to the “total immersion” model. The best re-entry care is not a matter of either/or, but *all*. Finances, time, and personnel may dictate a less than ideal approach,

but a coordinated effort by those involved with the MK on the field, upon entry and in the early months of adjustment can be very effective.

In some ways, pre-departure preparation reaches back over the MK’s lifetime. Prior to leaving for the host country and during furloughs, parents have a responsibility to build relationships with relatives and friends to which the MK can return. The home church and relatives can provide a place and resources that the MK can anticipate prior to leaving the field. The mission board can help by providing proper information and being available to meet and welcome the MK if others cannot.

The MK school plays a special role in re-entry. It can help MKs prepare by giving them up-to-date information on college life, trends, and styles. Pre-departure care must also include more basic preparation, including beginning to do the work of worry. MKs must begin to think through their new situation and develop positive but realistic expectations.

Some critical help must come from on-field services. It is extremely important to assist an MK in proper closure of the overseas experience. Resolution of conflicts with other MKs, school personnel, nationals, or parents is an important part of this, as unfinished business can hamper the process of adjustment. MKs can be helped to be reconciled to people with whom they have had conflict prior to leaving the host country.

Adequate farewells are also important in pre-departure preparation. Opportunity to do certain things planned but never experienced as well as saying good-bye to places and people allows for good closure. A satisfactory send-off is also important. Schools, parents, and mission personnel should facilitate this.

A third area of pre-departure care is the development of proper expectations. These expectations should be realistic and positive—realistic enough to recognize that there will be conflict and distress, but positive enough to provide an anticipation of successful adjustment. Too often, MKs have far too negative expectations of returning to their home country. Exaggerated fears based on misinformation do not enable healthy adjustments.

Pre-departure preparation may be limited because the MK may not be asking the questions for which he is given answers. If there is a lack

of previous stressful experiences, MKs may not be open to the recognition that this time they will be on their own. However, proper instruction gives a base for decisionmaking in the early stages of adjustment.

The experience of re-entry is a critical point in caring for the MK, and a re-entry seminar can play an important part. Positive results can be gained both from an early seminar and one that takes place after the MK has been immersed in the new culture. The value of the later seminar is that many questions have been raised and the MK is ready for help. The weakness is that some harmful choices may have been made which could have been intercepted.

An early seminar can help MKs adjust expectations to be both positive and realistic, saving them from some unnecessary stresses. They can learn strategies for dealing with the new and strange, and for coping with chaos in transition. Grouped with other MKs from many parts of the world, they have a sense of belonging and discover that feelings of confusion and uncertainty are very normal. The facilitators become a link between their world and the new culture. People who care, understand, and deal specifically with the experience give MKs a sense of trust that allows them to accept input.

### **Models**

Re-entry seminars may be structured from two basic models. The psychological model emphasizes emotional needs and leans on evaluation and personal counseling. The cross-cultural model emphasizes cultural variation and cross-cultural learning and adjustment. Simulation games, role playing, and discussion sessions are major tools in this model.

The best re-entry seminar is a combination of both models. If we perceive our task as developing and releasing the MK's potential, we face whatever problems are interfering with that process. Evaluation becomes the catalyst for counseling by qualified staff. However, sociological as well as psychological needs must be addressed. Cross-cultural stresses need to be explained and appropriate plans for coping discussed. The approach should not be either/or, but both.

### **The Key to Adjustment**

The key to re-entry adjustment is developing a proper perspective. At the core MKs need a perspective on the God who controls their lives. Joseph was a "third-culture kid" who never lost his equilibrium because of his unshakeable confidence in God's person, purpose, promise, and process. The MK needs that perspective reinforced. One girl wrote from college, "I do find myself lonely, and making friends is not as easy as it would be in a group of MKs, but God is definitely the same here as he is anywhere else in the world."

When the person's perspective of God is in place, there is a foundation for building and reinforcing a proper self-view, which is critical to making a good adjustment. Perspectives on the experience of transition and culture shock, being an MK, values, and one's view of host and home cultures have a framework for thinking and action.

The re-entry seminar, building on a good perspective and proper personal view, needs to address both specific problem areas and practical living skills. Issues include dating, social skills, establishing status, learning how to learn in a new environment, and dealing with grief and depression. Learning skills of banking, shopping, and time management and tasks like telephone and laundromat use helps to build confidence.

Post re-entry care is important to the MK's ongoing development. No true cross-cultural adjustment occurs until the person has been immersed in that culture. At that stage, questions are clearly defined and needs are no longer vague anxieties but specific concerns.

How do I use the library? Why are the other first-year students so shallow? Where can I go for the holidays? Is anyone really concerned about missions or even international affairs? Why do I feel out of it? How do I get a driver's license? Answers to these questions and the meeting of needs must come from a network of care.

A caring community on a Christian college campus can help by developing an MK or international club where people with common backgrounds and interests meet intellectual, sociological, and psychological needs. A big brother/big sister program involving MKs who are older students establishes contact with people of similar background and provides mentors. Hospitality from local churches, as well as a college administration that is alert to special MK needs and provides services and programs to meet those needs, can furnish consistent support.

Counselors who are qualified to respond to the needs of MKs should be identified and made available. Returned missionaries, faculty with overseas experience, and sensitized counseling staff are good resources. Counseling care begun in a re-entry seminar program should be followed up by counselors qualified to work with MKs.

Churches which support the missionary family financially have a special opportunity for practical ministry in helping with re-entry. The church can provide a "home away from home." If preparation was made during furloughs and there was continuing on-field contact, MKs will quickly feel cared for. They may not always need the supporting church base but it is great to know it is there, just in case. The home church, mission board, and interested families must take the initiative.

Other needs of the entering MK can be met through a network of doctors, lawyers, counselors, and home hosts who make themselves available for at least the first two years an MK is in the passport country. A communications network is needed to facilitate this.

Good re-entry adjustment is not an event; it is a process encompassing the life of the cross-cultural sojourner. The input of family, school and Christian community have structured MKs' God-view and self-view, keys to their adjustment. Pre-departure input helps in coping with conflicts from the past and determining expectations for re-entry. Re-entry seminars meet sojourners at a point of crisis and help them to maintain perspective and equilibrium during early adjustment. The ongoing care of a variety of agencies and individuals facilitates their moving toward a point of reasonable stability and positive forward motion.

All of us touch the MK's life at some point and can encourage others to become involved. If care is to be made available to all MKs, there must be concentrated effort by parents who take initiative to prepare the way and encourage their children to take advantage of available services. It will also require MK schools which strongly encourage, Christian colleges which strongly recommend, and mission boards and home churches which actively finance and help to put an effective re-entry program in place.

Proper action is based on a common awareness that we are dealing with normal human beings who have had unique experiences and face

uniquely structured pressures. We can provide a flow of care for the missionary family that can make an impact on the world for our Lord.

Adapted from a presentation at ICMK Manila, November 1984.

## 13.

### *Sudden Removal from the Field*

#### **John Powell**

I suppose there's nothing more frustrating for any of us than a sudden change in plans. Yet, anyone who is involved in missions knows that may be more the rule than it is the exception. Sudden removal from the field creates a tremendous amount of difficulty for some people, and yet others seem to take it in stride.

#### *Three Scriptures which Give us Insights*

First, let's look at Ephesians 4:29–32. “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word which is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice, and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

As we look at this from the perspective of processes and disruptions that go on in a sudden removal from the field, we can think both about these specific verses and the context in which they were written. It can prepare us for difficult transitions and the accommodations we need to make. Being equipped as saints is the background that prepares people for making sudden removal less disrupting.

The second passage is in Romans 5:1–5, which deals with processes that follow a sudden disruption. It reads as follows: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exalt in hope of the glory of God.” That is the preparation part again. Next comes the part about tribulation or disruption. “And not only this, but we also exalt in our tribulation, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance proven character, and proven character hope, and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our heart through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” That is one way of

looking at a successful transition process following a sudden or strong disruption.

The first part of the process is the event or tribulation or series of tribulations. The second part is the longer process of developing perseverance in the circumstances, which then results in proven character and finally a sense of hope. This process is a very deepening kind of thing for the individual and, I believe, for the Body, resulting in being grounded once again in the love of God in Jesus Christ. The final result is that we are not disappointed.

The third passage is Galatians 6:1–5, which gives us insight about the restoration that is sometimes necessary after sudden removal. “If anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone and not in regard to another, for each shall bear his own load.”

This describes an interactional process based on relationships that has as its end result some restoration after a difficult event. It deals with being trapped or caught in sin, but I think it also applies to any disruptive pattern that requires restoration, whether or not sin was involved.

#### *Three Principles*

The principles which help produce healthy approach to sudden removal are in three areas: (1) *preparation* that will reduce the untoward consequences, (2) *participation* in transitions which is biblically based, and (3) *restoration* that is based on relationship. These three principles are basic for understanding how to assist people in situations of sudden removal from the field.

#### *Three Experiences*

I'd like share a few personal experiences I've had over the last twenty or twenty-five years. The first one took place in a remote mission station in Asia. I spent two weeks there with the dual purpose of

gathering some research data and providing some training and counseling for the people on a large mission station. As we stepped out of the little mission plane on a beautiful day in the tropics and walked across the grassy strip with our heavy suitcases, the first person who came up to me said, "I need to talk to you." I walked a little farther, and someone else said, "I need to talk to you." When we talked, he said, "You will soon learn that two weeks ago one of our respected colleagues was flown in restraints to an airport on his way to return home. He had a nervous breakdown."

As those two weeks unfolded, many people talked to me about that event. There was guilt: "We should have seen it coming. How come we didn't?" There was grief: "What will we do without him? He had a key part in the work and he worked so hard. He was such a good leader for us." Some said, "Maybe he brought it on himself because he overworked and overextended himself." Others said, "I feel so sorry for his family! They don't know what to do now and no one knows what the outcome of this will be." There was a question about the children who were in boarding school and what they would do. Sudden removal from the field is a tremendously difficult thing, not only for the family but for the community. I saw firsthand the ripples of response in the community.

In another Asian city, my wife and I met a charming couple in their early forties, and asked if this was where they had always worked. They looked at each other knowingly and laughed. The husband said, "No, this is our third mission field. The first one was during the Vietnam War. We returned after furlough, and couldn't go back to our house. Everything was gone." Sudden removal from the field by extraneous circumstances. I asked about the second one and he said, "We went to a neighboring country, went on furlough again, and guess what? When we came back our house had been burned and all of our goods were gone again." Sudden removal from their place of work. As my wife Bev and I interacted with them, there was a tremendous sense of grace in this couple despite the tribulations that they had suffered. They had persevered and had proven character. I asked, "What if this happens again? Isn't it hard on you and your children and your family back home?" "Yes, it is. We hope it won't happen, but if it does, our hope is

that we'll be directed then to the place where we're supposed to be." Sudden removal from the field.

The third situation spanned a long period of time. It began in the basement of our house where we met with a few students. One couple was studying linguistics so they could be Bible translators in West Africa. The young potential missionary shared very personally with the group. He said, "You know, I really want to go to West Africa, but I'm not sure that I have my theology worked out in a way that will help me cope with the hardships that I am going to have." In due time they were sent to West Africa, and we had an opportunity to visit them a few years later. We could see they were gaining tremendous respect with the nationals out in the tribal allocation. We kept in touch with them through prayer letters and through personal notes at Christmas.

Then we got a letter that said, "Please pray. He has suddenly been removed from the field because of illness." He had some obstruction in his lower abdomen, was unable to eat for several days, and went to the local small hospital. Then suddenly there was such acute pain that he was evacuated quickly to a European hospital. There they learned that his lower bowel was filled with cancer. Sudden removal from the field. Think of the awful trip for that family when they had to gather their three children for an overnight flight to Europe. Think of the uncertainty. After his surgery I can remember his meeting me in Europe, and this vibrant, athletic, suntanned man that I had grown to know and love when he was at Michigan State was as thin as can be. After six months he told us, "The cancer has come back, and it's only a matter of time."

They returned to Michigan, and in the last weeks of his life we spent some very precious time together. As the cancer progressed and he went in and out of lucidity, he would sometimes put his finger on a portion of Scripture and ask me to read it. The last time I saw him, I read a passage of Scripture from the Psalms, then I turned to him and said, "Let me ask you, how's your theology working?" He said, "I have a theology that's really working, and I look forward to being with the Lord in a few days." Sudden removal from the field, but a sense of restoration and hope. Their children are grown now and his wife continues to make a real impact working with refugees in Europe.

Sudden removal from the field: it affects the person, the family, the community, the mission. It really affects all of us.

### ***Five Commonalities***

There are five commonalities that we can draw from these cases. First, all certainly are cases of sudden removal. Second, all have a disruptive effect on a number of people and communities. Third, all involve a sense of loss, and anyone who is going to help with that must understand the grief process. Fourth, they also require some adaptation. Fifth, most, if properly handled, can produce growth, hope, and reconciliation.

Sudden removal from the field can happen for a variety of reasons: illness, terrorist activities, break-ins, kidnaping, threats of death, conflict with home leadership, conflict with home church, conflict with nationals—there are many relational experiences that result in sudden removal from the field. Other reasons include violence within the family, sexual abuse, wife or husband abuse, unstable political situation, sexual immorality, and on and on. Many different events can result in sudden removal from the field, and it always affects many people.

### ***Tasks of the Helper***

One of the first tasks for those trying to assist people is to try stabilize the situation and the person or family as quickly as possible. If possible, the person should be given some clear reasons as to why this happened, so they can make sense of it. Any time there is a sudden disruption, the natural human response is to review the event again and again. People wonder if they could have done something differently. Was there something they didn't understand? It's a natural part of the process.

The second task is to restore some sense of control or predictability. Any time there is a sudden loss, particularly if it's a violation of the person in some way, there is a tremendous sense that he or she has lost control and predictability. During my own training in a VA hospital, a patient came in one day who was a truck driver and had had some difficulty out on the highways. He came into emergency intake, and the

psychiatrist there did something that I have always remembered. As soon as the necessary things were taken care of, the psychiatrist asked, "Where is your truck?" The man looked at him and said where it was. The psychiatrist said, "We'll make arrangements to have it pulled in some place where it is safe." The man thanked him. Already there was a sense of restoration and control. Several other very practical steps were taken.

That is the third task. Determine what the person's practical needs are so that they can begin a good process of transition which will lead to a successful outcome from the sudden removal.

### ***Crisis vs. Transition***

In order to understand sudden removal, we need to examine two particular areas. One is the nature of crisis, and the other is the nature of transition. The two are very closely related, yet very different. Crisis is what begins the process that is initiated by the unexpected. Transition is what completes a normal human process. The crisis is the trigger; the transition is the completion.

Sudden removal is not very different from other types of crises. It is important to understand that the severity of the crisis is not determined by the objective nature of the event itself, but by people's interpretation of the event. The couple from Vietnam who lost their entire household twice did not particularly interpret their loss as a severe crisis. They were able to adapt to it as within the normal range of events. Other people might return from furlough and find some important items missing, and it's a crisis. It's the interpretation of the event, not the event itself, that makes the difference.

The nature of transition is also important to understand. David C. Pollock has presented a model of five stages of transition. In a normal transition a person's focus narrows down more and more on the process of leaving, but then before they have completed the psychological leave-taking, they begin to think about the next step or the new sphere of activity. This looking ahead helps to make a smooth transitional process.

In a crisis such as a sudden removal from the field, however, there is a sense of things going along normally, and then all of a sudden it just gets closed off. You feel lost because you don't know how to predict

things or how to control or influence what happens. There is a gap between the time your ongoing activities come to a sudden halt and the time you can pick up and begin to make a more orderly transition. That in-between period of time is very critical in helping the person who has experienced sudden loss.

Let me suggest three particular areas as examples to look at. There has been an increasing frequency of cases of sexual immorality, sexual abuse or other destructive, unbiblical behaviors. What happens to the person who has been involved in that, then caught and suddenly removed from the field? Think of the loneliness and rejection and anxiety, and probably the abject sinfulness and shame that that person feels. What is our responsibility as a missions community for restoration of persons in that situation? Or do we simply reject them and say we will have nothing else to do with them?

Take a situation like the missionaries to Vietnam. Do we have a responsibility to provide some practical assistance for someone who has lost all their possessions?

Consider someone like the missionary from West Africa who, with his family, is thrust into an alien environment, in an unfamiliar medical setting, then sent back to the States wondering if he is going to live or die. What is the responsibility to his wife and children? What is the responsibility to the people he has left with his translation work back in West Africa? Those are issues that need to be addressed.

We said that the commonalities are sudden removal, disruptive effects, loss, requirement for adaptation, and the fact that the experience may produce growth. The key dynamic to remember when assisting someone who has experienced sudden removal is the sense of loss. No matter what the cause of removal is, there is an acute sense of loss. Effective intervention for people who experience sudden removal is preparation for various types of losses. People are prepared over a long period of time for coping with the kinds of things involved in sudden removal by their walk with God as expressed in Ephesians 4. There is loss of much more than just the work. There is the deeply personal loss of a sense of esteem. There is the loss of hope. There may be the loss of whatever joy the person has found. There is a loss of respect, a loss of confidence, even a loss of competency, or inner stability. The more

people are prepared by grounding themselves in the Word, the easier they will be able to make the required adaptation.

We all have things happen to us in our lives—beautiful things, terrible things, and we need to think about them and process them. While they are happening, there isn't time to ponder them. We need to sort them out, arrange them on the shelves of our minds. Someone who has been on the mission field and experiences sudden removal needs the time to review those experiences—to recapitulate the memories and arrange them on the shelves of the mind.

The most critical task in helping someone who has been suddenly removed from the field is to listen to their pain, to hear their story. It's to be patient with their process and to be there in such a way that you become Christ's person for their gradual steps toward restoration. Many of us, unfortunately, want people to be busy and accomplish things when what they need most is simply somebody who will be there and listen and help them through the crisis and transitional process.

The three passages of scripture that we looked at had to do with helping others be ready for, respond to, or be restored from sudden removal. It is a real challenge for us as a mission community to help our own who are, as Marjorie Foyle has put it in the title of her book, "honorably wounded" for whatever reason in the service of the Lord. Many people experience something like post-traumatic stress disorder or other kinds of symptoms after a sudden disruption, especially if they are not able to move through the whole process in a healthy way.

First and foremost, our task for those who have been suddenly removed from the field is a relational task. In a relational context, whether through a program or an individual, we can help them grapple with some of the spiritual or theological questions they inevitably ask. We can help meet practical needs and thereby enhance the process of restoration. We can help to meet needs for meaning and understanding. Finally, we can help them be restored.

### *Comments and Discussion:*

**Participant:** Many MKs have experienced sudden removal from the field. They have no control over what happens to them, and there is a

tremendous sense of loss for children. They may expect to leave after high school, but when they leave during the middle years, there is always a sense that they may never get back because they have no control. It is important for parents to remember that our children are also experiencing sudden removal from the field when we leave.

**John Powell:** Children have not yet had an opportunity to develop the adaptive processes or the maturity that most adults have. That puts more responsibility on the parents. It is important for parents to have relationships with other adults who are experiencing similar things, so that they can deal with their sense of loss and their lack of control and predictability.

**Participant:** In my experience, sudden removals from the field have been the unhappy, dishonorable types of discharge, where sin is involved. How can you help the people who are left behind deal with their feelings? They feel guilt and agonize about why they didn't notice or intervene. Yet if they talk about it, it sounds like gossip or hashing over the person's faults when he's not there to defend himself. How can the ones left behind deal with removal?

**John Powell:** It is important to deal with sin, and it is very important to get accurate, simple, necessary information, but not more than that. That's the starting place. Then someone who is good at leading discussion or facilitating group process needs to conduct one or two or more meetings where people can say what they need to say in an atmosphere of reconciliation and hope. One parallel to that on our campus is when there has been a serious accident or injury, murder, or suicide. The procedure that works best is to have someone come into the dorm or living unit and encourage people to process what happened. Almost always there is someone who emerges in a small group of people who is seen as a caregiver, whom people go to and trust. That would be the ideal person to facilitate. Then it is contained in such a way that it is not gossip, yet people are freed from the burden of their worries and thoughts.

It is better to err on the side of minimum disclosure rather than maximum disclosure in cases involving sin.

**Participant:** Sometimes there is dysfunction on mission fields because there is no opportunity to process emotion. This issue is one that MKs deal with, continuous loss and losses never grieved. I sense that I have numerous losses that I've never realized I needed to grieve.

**John Powell:** During my mid-thirties I realized that I had some ungrieved losses. I had grown up in a very small rural Midwestern town. As an adult, I came to realize that there was some unfinished business. When business took me to a city about 150 miles from the town where I grew up, I found myself planning an extra day or two in that town. I went back to the places where I had played as a boy and recalled some very early childhood events. I got in touch with my sense of loss that I didn't have those any more. I stood by the lake one day remembering an event that had happened with my little brother and just cried and cried as I realized some things that would never be that way again. That was a tremendously freeing experience.

My childhood experience was fairly normal, but think about the repeated losses, the separations, the transitions, that people in missionary service experience. They need more time to think about those experiences, to ponder and relive them and then let go of them. That can be part and parcel of their devotional time.

In my experience, the three things that come up again and again that prevent this processing are 1) overwork, 2) lack of time for devotions or reflection, 3) interpersonal conflict. All of them prevent the important growth processing that then frees you from your burdens. When you are free, then you can be there for people who are experiencing sudden removal, and without your even saying a word they sense a comfort in your presence which helps them.

**Participant:** How can we identify people who suffer from the secondary effects of a crisis, who fall through the cracks when we are intent on ministering to the person who has experienced the crisis?

**John Powell:** Some people either put up a good front or are very quiet and cooperative. They are like the nonassertive child who is sitting day after day in the classroom, hurting inside. One practical thing that can be done is to have a regular review for people, a personal check-up. This can be done by someone who is skilled in pastoral care, a sensitive

field administrator, or even someone on an ad hoc basis. There should be no sense of reporting to anybody, but the opportunity to sit down with someone and review where you are in your growth and your work.

There is a mission group for whom I've done pre-field evaluations for many years. It was built into their program to have the person come back and see me during each furlough. Sometimes we would talk for a number of hours, sometimes just an hour or two. As I related to some of these people over a fifteen-year period, we looked forward to our regular conversations. Most of us don't work with that kind of longitudinal history, but we can build in a periodic review where a person sits down and says how he's doing and knows that at least one other person is going to be concerned.

Based on a presentation made at ICMK Nairobi, November 1989.

## 14. *Preparing Our MKs for College*

### **Beth Wyse**

As an MK caregiver who travels throughout the United States visiting college MKs, I have observed a variety of their responses to life in America. I am particularly concerned about MKs who seem to be inadequately prepared for the societal realities in which they find themselves. A few enter college fully capable of handling the situations they encounter. The majority enter hesitantly, and over the four years develop into mature, capable, functioning adults. However, some individuals seem to be nearly incapable of functioning at the adult level expected once they leave the structured, cloistered, academic community they knew on the mission field. Parents, MK schools and mission personnel need to work together to prepare these teens for entry into U.S. society.

MK schools have done an excellent job of preparing students academically. Also, many MK school graduates seem more mature than their monocultural counterparts. However, I regularly see unnecessary gaps in the societal preparation of these otherwise well-rounded students. There are certain skills, attitudes, and qualities that MKs need for successful college experience. I propose that the following list of competencies should be developed in students prior to high school graduation.

In this context, "competency" refers to skills which the better than average teen should strive to develop. Although few (if any) individuals will acquire all of the skills listed, they are reasonable goals to pursue. No one factor can be cited as evidence for, or lack of, personal maturity. Every child is different. Even siblings may be total opposites, either in personality or development. So consideration must be given to each area in light of the individual.

This checklist is offered as a list of specific issues to consider as you try to determine your teen's college readiness. You will need to adapt it to fit your particular situation. It is not always possible to have had some of the experiences described here. That is not an indication of someone's failure as a parent, but points out the need for orchestrating situations

(probably in the U.S.) where they can occur. Ideally, this would happen during the junior year or the summer after the junior year of high school.

Ideally, a student entering college will demonstrate proficiency in the following areas:

**1) Emotional stability: possesses the self-confidence needed to initiate relationships, make decisions, and enter into U.S. society.**

- Has a sense of one's own limits and can say "no," even to fun things, rather than overschedule.
- Feels free to enjoy oneself and have fun in group settings.
- Can honestly admit mistakes, apologize to those wronged, and then move on without being burdened with guilt or self-recrimination.
- Can identify one's own symptoms of homesickness and knows how to address them in healthy ways.
- Demonstrates ability to control the extreme mood swings that often mark the earlier teen years.

**2) Practical knowledge: possesses the skills needed for independent living in the U.S. such as driving, banking, and conducting ordinary business.**

- Has a driver's license. (This or another official ID is needed for travel on U.S. airlines.)
- Can call an unknown business and arrange service such as telephone, electric, delivery, or mail order.
- Can make travel arrangements on public transportation and travel alone or with a peer without undue emotional stress.
- Can use a calling card or prepaid phone card and a cellular phone.
- Reads the fine print when signing up for music or book clubs, etc.
- Has a frequent flyer account.
- Sorts and does laundry using coin-operated machines.

- Can care for a car; i.e., knows how to pump gas at a self-service station, can check and add oil to a car engine, and knows what to do when various dash warning lights go on in a car.
- Can perform routine household tasks; e.g., cook basic meals, load and run a dishwasher, and use a microwave.
- Can safely start and run a lawnmower (guys and girls!).
- Knows how to change a diaper (guys and girls!).
- Knows to call emergency 911 and/or emergency road service.

**3) Spiritual development: demonstrates the maturity to associate with a local church as well as the spiritual discernment and personal morality to cope with temptation in a world of freedom.**

- Has established one's own relationship with a church youth group.
- Has a reasonably positive attitude toward churches in one's home assignment country.
- Has a sense of belonging in at least one home assignment church.
- Has an understanding of the manipulative practices of dangerous religious groups (new cults) and is equipped to resist the warm fuzzies they often use to hook unsuspecting people.
- Has maintained consistent, self-motivated daily devotions.

**4) Financial responsibility: handles money well, understands and uses a budget (sees the big picture, not just the cash available at the moment), saves up money prior to making a purchase, and understands the cost of living on one's own.**

- Has saved for a significant purchase.
- Is given a predetermined amount of spending, clothes money, etc., in a lump sum and can stretch it to last a given period of time.
- Uses a simple written budget and can save a percentage of earnings for future, planned use.
- Has a checking account, can reconcile bank statements and knows how much money is actually available.

- Understands about coupons, rebates, and sales, and shops around rather than buying on impulse.
- Tithes a portion of one's money.
- Can use a checking account and an ATM card.
- Pays for long distance phone calls (sees the bill and identifies one's own calls).
- Understands the dangers and traps of easy credit card access.

**5) Communication/Social skills: demonstrates confidence initiating conversations and can clearly yet tactfully articulate needs, feelings, opinions, and suggestions.**

- Contributes thoughtful opinions in discussions with peers and adults.
- Chooses to introduce oneself to others in a new setting.
- Chooses friends wisely.
- Tactfully offers dissenting opinions.
- Establishes and maintains substantial friendships in which one can give as much or more than one receives.
- Has a number of close friends of both genders.
- Has established limits in physical relationships with the opposite sex based on one's own convictions.
- Understands the sexual feelings and temptations one is experiencing currently and will face even more intensely in college.
- Knows basic guidelines of public conduct and safety in large North American cities (e.g., avoids eye contact, is aware if someone may be following, knows how to carry a purse or wallet, avoids unlit areas, travels in groups at night).

**6) Responsible behavior: Accomplishes what is expected without outside prodding, completes tasks in a timely fashion, recognizes and voluntarily does household chores, rarely makes excuses, and initiates communication with the responsible person when he or she cannot complete a task as expected.**

- Completes tasks without parental or supervisory pressure.

- May have a messy room, but keeps one's "junk" picked up in more public areas.
- Doesn't borrow without permission.
- Makes appropriate arrangements for schedule changes.
- Takes initiative to see a task and do it well.
- Shows appropriate respect for authority (teachers, school administrators, church leaders, police, adults in general).
- Can visit a doctor alone, discuss symptoms, plan and ask pertinent questions, and handle taking medications. Knows health history.

**7) Identity awareness: has a healthy understanding of who one is, knows own strengths and weaknesses, and demonstrates appropriate autonomy.**

- Understands characteristics of a TCKs (Third Culture Kids) and how they have been impacted.
- Can identify three personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Is comfortable with the freedom of making personal decisions and is not overly swayed by group pressure.
- Has had a growth experience going against the group.
- Is relatively content with own physical appearance.

**8) Decision making: understands the decision-making process (seeking advice, evaluating the pros and cons), accepts the consequences of decisions, and learns from mistakes.**

- Has freedom to make real decisions about significant things such as when and how to study, curfew, bedtime, dating.
- Draws up a list of pros and cons when making important decisions.
- Consults appropriate friends (peer and non-peer), family, and non-family for input before making a final decision.
- Is allowed to spend one's own money and is not bailed out when one runs out or is in debt to others.
- Has been given and willingly accepts the responsibility to make the final decision about which college to attend.

- Has made at least one poor decision, suffered the consequences, and learned from the experience.

**9) *Work ethic: understands the commitments of employment, importance of arriving on time, not using work time for personal activities, and avoiding unauthorized use of equipment and materials.***

- Finishes tasks on time, in the way the supervisor expected.
- Has worked for an employer outside the mission community.
- Tries to do a good job rather than just put in time.
- Is willing to work overtime or stay late if employer requests.
- Has confidence to ask a supervisor for help or a change in schedule.
- Can conduct oneself appropriately in a job interview.
- Can determine if a job is appropriate (skills required, flexibility of hours, security issues, transportation, etc.).

**10) *Time management: balance between studies and social activities; not unduly stressed out by responsibilities, and makes good decisions about sleep, proper food, and recreation.***

- Sets own bedtime and curfew using good judgment.
- Gets to appointments, classes, and events on time without constant prodding from adults.
- Is responsible for getting himself or herself up in the morning.

### ***Hindrances***

Many circumstances may contribute to an MK's lack of appropriate development. I have more often seen serious deficiencies in female MKs. The following factors seem to contribute to weak spots in an MK's development.

First, a large age difference between the student and the parents. Many older parents do not really understand their own teen and are even less informed about teen life and culture in general. This leads to unrealistic expectations about the student's experience in the U.S. and may contribute to inadequate preparation.

Second, an overprotective or isolated environment (either in a primitive setting or a Christian "bubble") can prevent a student from developing normal independence. Independence is best learned in the balance of freedom and responsibility, with opportunities to fail in a supportive environment.

Third, parents may be uncomfortable relating to today's young career women. Some girls describe being treated as princesses while growing up. If their most significant role models demonstrate traditional homemaking roles, these girls may be ill-equipped to live as single adults.

Fourth, a child who is used to a mother or servants doing everything often finds routine tasks stressful. Adults sometime think MKs are lazy and unappreciative. The inability of MKs to do their part without being asked can be a significant point of friction in relationships.

These same kids often are a frustration to employers. All kids go through the shock of their first job where they are expected to do things they either don't like or consider to be beneath them—usually around age 16. An MK may have a first job at 18 or 19 without having learned this valuable lesson. One who rebels, either openly or passively ("forgetting" to do the unpleasant task), will quickly be without a job.

Fifth, parents who express an exaggerated fear of the U.S. set their kids up for a difficult time. I have often heard missionaries say, "I'm sure glad my kids aren't growing up in the United States." Though I sympathize to some extent with this sentiment, it is detrimental to kids who hear it often. It implies that everyone in the U.S. is somehow flawed. A student who has this subconscious attitude will resist fitting in and can easily alienate oneself from the very people one so desperately needs.

Finally, the lack of a true employer-employee experience as a young teen can be a significant disadvantage in the world of work. Many MKs come from cultures where promptness is not highly valued. In the U.S. workplace, even being a few minutes late more than once may be a serious problem. Most MKs have the wonderful cross-cultural skill of flexibility. They often assume that others are as adaptable as they are when a change of plans is necessary. When they make a last minute decision not to go to work because a good friend from high school just

dropped in unannounced, they fail to understand why their employer is so frustrated with them. These actions are often interpreted as an I-don't-care attitude and are seldom tolerated.

When a preponderance of these factors is present, teens often find the United States a fearful and overwhelming place. They seem to get stuck in the hibernation stage of cross-cultural adaptation, and they do only what is absolutely necessary to survive. It is at this point that MKs frequently talk about returning home to the country of their childhood. I fear for them if they return as children in adult bodies. However, I am equally concerned for their well-being when they are forced to remain in the U.S. without any help.

### ***Solutions***

We are often tempted to think nothing can be done until the teen graduates and moves to the U.S. Significant, planned preparation must begin much earlier than that. It may take major orchestration on the part of parents, but if they want to save their child a mountain of stress, the effort is worth it. Here are several things that parents should consider and schools should encourage.

#### ***1) Time in the U.S. during high school***

A furlough is invaluable if accompanied by a capable mentor who can introduce the MK to the realities of young adult life. If this does not happen naturally, parents need to be proactive in seeking out such a person to be a peer of the parent or a young adult. If the mentor is a peer of the parent, he or she must be able to relate well and earn the respect of the teens of the community or church. Expertise does little good if the teen perceives the mentor as an authority figure rather than a caring friend.

A young adult in his or her twenties who demonstrates maturity and personal common sense will have a great impact on any teen MK. High school students naturally look up to and appreciate a college student or recent graduate who takes an interest. The MK sees this person as someone who can interpret U.S. youth culture for him. This person has almost instant credibility because he or she is young enough to have

relevant personal experience to share, rather than relating lessons learned a generation ago.

When a furlough does not fall during the late high school years, an independent home country experience would be appropriate. The limited time frame of the summer after the junior year gives the student opportunity to develop confidence and the ordinary skills needed for life in the U.S., without the sense of being totally alone.

Parents will need to find a supportive environment for their child. Every home that volunteers may not be appropriate. A host family needs to understand the purpose of this time. Parents will want to communicate a number of areas where specific attention needs to be given: to banking, driving, getting and keeping a job, and using a laundromat, just to name a few. While you don't want to overwhelm a host family with these tasks or a sense of rearing your child, they need to understand that these experiences are ones you cannot provide for your child at home.

A simple evaluation form of three or four questions which hosts can fill out every couple of weeks might help them facilitate this growth experience. It will certainly communicate that you want and value their assessment and insights concerning your child's development.

By doing this at intervals throughout the summer all of you will be able to note progress. It would also be wise to invite them to identify additional areas that may need continued attention throughout the school year. They will no doubt mention typical teen issues that you have no way of knowing about, since teen culture in the U.S. changes almost completely every four years.

#### ***2) Onfield experiences***

Giving children appropriate, yet significant, ministry involvement and leadership opportunities will go a long way in preparing them for what lies ahead. Both the MK school and the parent should cooperate to develop these ministry skills. Parents, if your child has been involved in ministry while away at boarding school, look for ways to capitalize on that at home as well. Though you will naturally want to slow down and spend significant time with your kids while they are home on vacations, your complete withdrawal from ministry responsibility can be a disservice to your children. Giving them positive, meaningful

involvement in your ministry will instill in them a self-confidence that they can draw on in difficult circumstances in years to come.

Teens need an environment where progressive problem solving and decision making experiences are routine. With each year of increased decision making they should be given more true freedom and responsibility. To do this they need an environment which offers the real possibility of failure, and includes evaluation so they can benefit from their mistakes.

MK schools need to be particularly aware of this decision making issue. Too often the only real options are to obey or disobey. For the school, it is much easier to have black-and-white rules about all important areas of social conduct. Unfortunately, this can set up a student for failure in college, where even the finest Christian schools will give students much more freedom, expecting students to make good adult decisions.

Often MKs who are used to having rules clearly spelled out are somewhat overwhelmed by the freedom they suddenly have. As a result freedom, a very good thing, becomes a bad thing because the student has no sense of balance and tries to do everything he or she has never been allowed or had the opportunity to do. Even the students who do not rebel may find it hard to say No to all of the fun activities they encounter. An excess of clubs, games, parties, dates, movies, or discussions may crowd out time for sleep and studies and will certainly drain the pocketbook.

We MK caregivers, whatever our title—parent, educator, field or mission leader—must work cooperatively in our effort to minimize the hindrances and maximize the solutions, as we empower students with the skills and strengths they need to handle young adult roles in the United States.

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## 15. *Making Career Choices*

**David L. Wickstrom**

The issue of deciding on a career, and specifically knowing what is just the right niche to fit into is at best a difficult process, and at worst a confusing and agonizing hot issue for missionaries and MKs. Why is this the case? There are several reasons. First of all, there is the view one holds of what is God's will. A number of years ago, Gary Friesen wrote a book called *Decision Making and the Will of God* in which he contrasted what he called "the traditional view" with a sound exegesis of what Scripture actually says about work and careers. The traditional view, according to Friesen, is illustrated by the metaphor of a target. There is one bull's-eye, one type of work to which one should aspire and which is in God's will, and if a person misses the bull's-eye he or she is settling for less than God's best and is outside God's will.

With careful exegesis and solid analytical thinking, Friesen argues that there are *numerous* careers a person can choose, that God is more interested in the character of each person than in a particular kind of work, and that any job is honorable so long as it is not sinful or forbidden in Scripture. Friesen goes on to point out that how a person makes a decision should include such things as listening to the wisdom of others, paying attention to and identifying one's own gifting and interests, and praying fervently about the decision.

The book has been a best-seller among Christians because of the refreshing freedom offered, and while it has been recommended reading by many mission boards. However, the message of the book has been overlooked, ignored, or contradicted by long-held beliefs about how God leads people in the area of career decision-making. For missionaries, particularly, a sense of "call"—knowing or feeling that God has led them to be missionaries—has caused consternation for some when they went overseas and found that their gifts, talents, interests, skills, and personality style were either unwanted, unneeded, or detrimental to the work in the country to which they felt called. For others who may have had to return to their sending country because of health, lack of financial support, family problems, or civil unrest in the country of service,

confusion and dismay have reigned. The missionaries (and sometimes their churches) have often asked whether they had misread God and “missed the bull’s-eye” or wondered if there might be some sin in their lives which prevented them from being effective. Numerous other explanations have been offered as well, but for many people confusion, guilt and pain remain, and there is little freedom in choosing a new career.

For some MKs raised in a missionary ethos and taught by word or action that each person needs a specific call or sense of “knowing God’s will about a career,” there can be confusion of a similar sort. When they “don’t get a specific call” or cannot ascertain exactly what is God’s will, they may feel unspiritual, guilty, or somehow like they are second-hand citizens in God’s kingdom; otherwise they would have gotten the word about what God wanted them to do.

As a result, many MKs decide, either out of excruciating discomfort with the process or because it is familiar, that they have been called to be missionaries like their parents. For many of them, returning either to the country where they grew up or to a similar country is comfortable and is accompanied by such a “sense of peace” that they decide this must have indeed been God’s will. That is, until trouble hits, at which time the MK may decide a bad decision had been made! Dismay and confusion may then reign again.

For others, confusion about career decisionmaking occurs because they do not know enough about themselves or about what careers are available, so they wander from job to job with little sense of fulfillment or effectiveness. This can be especially true for missionaries who have had to return from the field prematurely or who are of retirement age but do not want to fade over the horizon with no purpose or meaningful work in their lives. It can also be true for MKs who have returned to the sending country upon graduation from high school overseas, and who do not know what is the next step for them educationally or vocationally. Especially in remote areas of service or in schools with limited facilities or information about career choices in the “home” country, neither missionaries nor MKs can make career plans. How does one make a thoughtful, well-informed choice?

This writer concurs with Friesen that there are many choices available to the typical returned missionary or MK, and that God is much more interested in developing character than that each person be in a certain career. That is not to say that God is not interested in what we do; instead he gives us the means of finding out what would help us to glorify him most effectively, by who we are *and* by what we do. Research and the wisdom of God’s Word give us clues about the steps to take to make a wise and well-thought-out decision.

### ***Factors to Be Considered***

Research indicates that there are eight different factors which need to be considered in order to be most effective and content in the work we do. They are: abilities, skills, interests, personality and personal style, messages from family of origin, personal values, vision and goals, and stage of development in life. By accurately identifying these characteristics each person is better equipped to choose the particular niche into which to fit.

#### ***Abilities***

The first area is that of abilities, those characteristics of a person which are similar to the Scriptural concept of gifts, and the pattern of abilities in each person as unique as such physical characteristics as gender, hair and eye color, or height and weight. Abilities do not improve with use, nor do they deteriorate with disuse. In this way they differ from skills, which improve with practice and use and deteriorate when not used. For example, a person might have musical abilities but not know how to play a piano (a skill). With enough motivation and practice a person without musical abilities might become very proficient in playing the piano, but not as skillful as someone who practices and has musical abilities as well. Abilities also make the development of a skill easier and faster.

When a person has certain abilities and performs a task easily, it may be puzzling when someone notices it as something special, and he or she may respond with, “What’s so special? It’s just something I do. Can’t everyone?” One’s ability pattern is usually evident by age 14, though some people have specific spiritual gifts which may be endowed upon them after conversion and not have been present or noticed prior to

the conversion experience. At the same time, it should be noted that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of Lights” (James 1:17); therefore, all our abilities (gifts) are from God and have spiritual significance. We are most effective when we use our abilities and develop skills to go with them. But when we do not know our abilities and therefore do not use them, we are less effective than we could be.

### **Skills**

Many people have difficulty identifying their skills, not realizing that they may have developed skills through life experiences. For example, an MK who helped parents with evangelism through personal witnessing and tract distribution may have developed linguistic, communication, observation, and organizational skills necessary for inventorying materials and for scheduling trips—without realizing it. When these skills are identified, one can make use of them by transferring them to other career areas.

### **Interests**

A third factor to keep in mind is interests. In Philippians 2:13, Paul writes, “It is God who is at work in you both to will (to want) and to do (to perform) of his good pleasure.” In his book, Friesen points out that it is often by the desires and longings of our hearts that God leads us into a career that best fits who we are. Those who are not really interested in a particular area are usually not as effective or motivated, and they often burn out more quickly.

Upon his return to the United States, one missionary said, “I’ve always wanted to restore and sell old houses, and I have some experience and abilities which might help me do that. I don’t have enough money to put my kids through college, so maybe I can earn it this way.” He did just that and was happier than he had been in years, to say nothing of his family who had suffered with him in situations where his gifts, abilities, and experience had not been appreciated or used and in which he was extremely unhappy.

On the other hand, interests alone are not the sole factor to consider in making a career decision. Some high school students decide to go to college to become medical doctors because they have always been interested in the idea of helping people and making a lot of money and

have found the subject to be fascinating. Unfortunately, when they got to college they found they did not have the abilities, nor did they do well enough in the classes to make it into medical school. It is also unfortunate that most high school counselors and programs give primary consideration to grades and SAT or ACT scores in combination with the expressed interests of the student, and push the student in a direction which may not fit other characteristics of who he or she is.

### **Personality and Personal Style**

Many people find themselves in positions in which their particular personality style does not fit. For example, a person who is outgoing and talkative and who likes a variety of things will just not fit into a position being left alone in a room making widgets all day long. By the same token, a more reserved person who prefers research and learning everything possible about a particular area will not function well when expected to interact with people constantly with little time for quiet research or contemplation. A person who is very detail oriented and who needs a plan for every activity will often do very poorly when placed where schedules are of no use and materials are not available when needed. This often occurs with people who are used to structure moving to a very unstructured culture in the two-thirds world. Fitting a person into a situation which matches his or her personality and melds well with other people is crucial; otherwise, both the person and the co-workers may be frustrated.

### **Messages from the Family of Origin**

One factor seldom considered is that of messages from one’s family of origin. These messages are extremely important. They may be simply absorbed by osmosis, as parents give direction by how they live and what they do. Is it any wonder that at one point several years ago 35% of new missionaries were MKs? Likewise, doctors, lawyers, and ministers often come from families in which there was a doctor, lawyer, or minister. The influence may be either subtle or overt; for example, “We have had a doctor in the family for fifteen generations, and we don’t have one yet. You’ll make us proud when you get your doctor’s degree.”

Other messages may be more about style e.g., parents who respond to anyone who needs help at any time of day or night. Or the parents may be successful financially or are frugal savers who keep tight control

on their money and encourage their children to do the same. Identifying these patterns can help a person decide either to maintain the same style and career or to adapt and change the style from that of one's parents. In either case, the messages are significant and need attention.

### **Personal Values**

A sixth factor is personal values. Most missionaries and MKs are directed by spiritual values which are reinforced by Scriptures emphasizing service to others, self-sacrifice, using one's gifts, evangelizing the world, and being faithful in the tasks they undertake. But these are not the only values which can guide one's life. For example, security for oneself and providing family security may be a strong value, especially if one has grown up in a country in which there was little order and where chaos reigned. Other people may prefer a life of one challenge after another; or a person may value autonomy and independence, the opportunity to be one's own boss, taking responsibility for one's own self. Providing joy through entertainment may be valued, as may the making and giving away of money. These are just a few of the values which guide a person and which, when not followed, can become the source of much dissatisfaction, discontent, and guilt.

### **Clear Vision and Goals**

The most significant contributor to effectiveness and fulfillment in a career is having a clear vision and goals to pursue. The Scripture says in Proverbs 29:18, "Without a vision the people perish." This verse can also be rendered, "Without a vision the people wander around aimlessly."

When a person has not identified his or her abilities, skills, interests, personal style, messages from family of origin and personal values, it is difficult to imagine working in a certain career. But when a person's characteristics are identified and opportunities for work are clarified, when a person can "see himself doing something and can't see himself doing anything but that," then making career decisions becomes simpler, and the person is more likely to be satisfied. Also it is more likely that the person will experience greater longevity and effectiveness in the career. Research indicates that approximately 80% of one's satisfaction and contentment comes from having a clear vision and goals to pursue.

### **Stage of Career Development**

The eighth and final consideration is one's stage of career development. People usually go through six different stages at which career decisions are evaluated and made. Stage one is when a person goes from high school to post-high-school opportunities. This is often a very difficult time for MKs, especially if they have had little exposure to possible opportunities after high school. The second stage is moving into the workplace after college or any other post-high-school education. Many students finish their college education and then wonder how they are going to use the information they learned or how to apply their major.

Many find that their major simply prepares them for additional schooling and that careers are not available immediately upon graduation. This can be somewhat upsetting.

Even if students do decide on a job or career after college, they may find that they don't like the work after a few years. Between 28 and 33 years of age the majority of people re-evaluate and often change careers. This occurs again between approximately 40 and 45, the mid-life transition time. At this age people are often beginning to wonder whether they have accomplished what they wanted to, they are becoming aware that they have neither the energy nor the motivation they once did, and once more may change careers.

Between 50 and 55 career decision making takes another turn. People begin asking—now that the children are out of the home—what is most meaningful and what they might leave to posterity. Bob Buford, in his book *Halftime*, says that at this stage people may move from a desire for success to a desire for significance. Finally, between 60 and 65 people begin considering what they are going to do when they retire. Most people do not wish to sit around on the beach watching the porpoises play all day but want productive, useful, and meaningful lives.

Some people identify an additional stage, in the mid-70s, when people make career changes as well. In her book *The New Passages*, Gail Sheehy tells of people in their nineties who are productive and working effectively. These career changes indicate that what one considers a viable career at age 18 will be very different from what is viable at age 30, 45, or 65. Keeping this in mind can help people at any stage of life—including missionaries and missionary kids—make new

decisions about careers, all of which can continue to provide fulfillment and glorify God.

### ***How to Choose a Career***

The next consideration is the *process* of choosing a career. How does one identify one's abilities, skills, interests, personality, family messages, and values so as to develop a clear vision and goals for the future? For each of the above issues or factors there are methods of assessment, some of which are more effective than others. Traditional career assessments and workshops will usually take into account only two or three of the factors, and these are often subjectively-based measurements. For example, a typical career assessment will involve taking an interest inventory, a personality test, and if done by a Christian, may involve a spiritual gifts test. These assessments are usually subjective in nature ("I think I would like the work of an automobile mechanic," or "People have told me I would be good as a singer.") The counselor will then spend several sessions, often at great expense, working with the client to help identify possible career choices. Let's look at the various factors and how to access them.

#### ***Identifying Abilities***

One can use a long or short method to identify abilities. The long method, more subjective in nature, means reflecting on what has come naturally, easily, and quickly over a lifetime of school and experience. What were the easy courses in school that produced the best grades? Which activities and skills came most easily and quickly; which ones were noticed by others as gifts but seemed just normal and natural to you? For example, did sports, music, working with tools, analyzing and theorizing, performing experiments, drawing, painting, or designing come easily and naturally to you? This can be a tedious exercise, but it can produce results when each year of schooling and experience is analyzed. It demands an excellent memory and input from others (teachers, parents, friends, peers, co-workers) who are willing to help fill in the blanks.

Other sources of input are aptitude tests taken in high school and college or standardized psychological tests emphasizing aptitudes. Unfortunately many of these standardized tests are limited in scope,

focusing primarily on what would be school-based aptitudes and abilities.

Others like the ASVAB (the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) are limited to abilities which might be useful in the military and have some transferability to civilian life.

The most objective and extensive ability assessments are based on the Johnson-O'Connor battery, which has tasks or work samples covering about twenty different areas of ability. Spinoffs of this test include the AIMS battery and The Highlands Program, which is a comprehensive plan including testing and follow-up workshops. Usually, four hours of testing are required, followed by two hours of feedback and a report.

Of these three programs, The Highlands Program is the most comprehensive because Personality/Personal Style and Interests are measured. For many people, simply going through the testing and feedback sessions is sufficient to give needed direction, and this has been very effective for MKs tested both in the U.S. and overseas.

#### ***Identifying Skills***

There are few measures available for identifying skills; however, with the help of others, people can identify what they do well. In order to be thorough, it is important to identify not only the major skills (play the piano, make speeches in front of people, learn a foreign language) but also to identify the meta-skills which may not be recognized as easily (talk easily with young children, organize games at summer camp, organize a kitchen cupboard or household). Consultation with a trained career counselor can also help.

In the author's opinion, the best format for providing comprehensive information on skills are workshops designed for teens and adults by The Highlands Program. These workshops provide a group setting in which a person can identify skills and get feedback from others.

#### ***Identifying Interests***

Using the long method, one can sit down with a sheet of paper and ask oneself and one's parents and friends what has caught their attention over the years and what seems to be interesting right now. Often an interest from childhood remains an interest throughout life. Make a list of those interests, and prioritize them with numbers from most to least interesting. Ask others, "What did I like to do when I was younger, and

what did I say I wanted to be?" Tests which access areas of interests include the *Jackson Vocational Interest Inventory* or, more commonly used by career counselors, the *Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory*. The *Strong-Campbell* has been used by Larry Burkett in his Career Pathways program. The Highlands Program also helps identify interests through testing and workshops.

### **Identifying Personality Factors**

This is one of the most difficult areas to identify on one's own. Others can describe one's personality, but often the information is either not helpful or may trigger some defensiveness. Typical tests used to identify personality issues related to work are the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) or the *Personal Profile System* also known as the DISC. Some counselors use the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory* (MMPI) or the *16 Personality Factor Test* (16PF) as part of the evaluation. Using one or more of the above tests in a workshop setting is most effective.

### **Identifying Family Messages**

Identifying family messages using the long method may be difficult and requires a great deal of insight and input from other family members such as siblings and parents. A frequently-used method is to engage in individual or family therapy with a counselor who can help identify these messages. Other methods include life history questionnaires and Life Script Questionnaires which can be administered and interpreted by professional counselors in a workshop or in one-on-one conversation.

### **Identifying Values**

Identifying one's personal values is not an easy task. It requires a great deal of insight and introspection. Another approach is to use books such as Steven Covey's *First Things First*, or *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, or workshops based on his books. Edgar Schein's book and seminars called *Career Anchors* also address the issue of values, and The Highlands Program includes a helpful values sort exercise. A clear understanding of one's values along with the other pieces of the career puzzle makes it possible to develop a clearer vision of what the future holds.

### **Identifying Stages of Career Development**

At any stage of development, missionaries and others can profit from a careful and comprehensive review of the eight factors described above. Some missionaries have gone through The Highlands Program Ability Battery to help them refine their job responsibilities and choices while on the field. Other missionaries profit at crucial transition times as they move from one placement to another or return to the sending country for various reasons. Having some clarity regarding new options can be helpful after having spent significant time away from the workplace in the sending country. At times the tunnel vision developed from the missionary focus is counterproductive to successfully developing a new career or finding a new job.

For MKs an ideal time to address the issue of career choices is during the junior or senior year of high school, either while on furlough or while overseas. Testing should include a battery measuring at least abilities, interests, and personality style. Options for colleges and college majors can then be discussed and applications completed, along with requests for scholarships and grants. Not all high school students are college material, but an ability battery like that offered by The Highlands Program can be most helpful in providing direction for a vocational/technical school, a specialty school, or choices in the military.

Current statistics indicate that 50% of college students take seven years to finish college rather than the traditional four years, and 44% of incoming college freshmen never get a degree. Many of these young people do not know who they are or what they want. There is no clear vision, so they transfer colleges and change majors several times. Given these statistics and considering the extremely high cost of college education, it is clear that good assessment and direction before graduating from high school could provide significant savings to parents of MKs, who usually have limited funds. The lifelong fulfillment and effectiveness which could result from a thoughtful process would be the greatest gift of all.

## 16.

### *Career Developments: Woodstock Class of 1968*

#### **Steve Van Rooy**

My earliest memories are of traveling back into the hills where my parents worked, in India close to the border of Tibet. After we got off the train, we walked for eight to ten days to reach our home. I didn't realize until many years later that this was, even in India, rather unusual.

In the mid-fifties, there was trouble in China and in Tibet, and it caused the whole border area to become sensitive. So the Indian government asked all missionaries who were back up in those areas to move out.

My parents moved to a little town in the hills of north India called Mussoorie, where Woodstock School is located. I attended eleven out of twelve grades at that school.

I have very fond memories of Woodstock School. I especially remember the spectacular natural beauty of the setting in which it was located. When you reach the top of the first range of mountains in the Himalayas at 7,000 feet, you have a fantastic 180-degree panoramic view of the Himalayas in front of you. It is simply a gorgeous setting for a school.

I graduated from high school at Woodstock in 1968, and I think that I reflect the feelings of my classmates when I say that our experience there gave us much more than an education. I believe we received a rich heritage, for which we will always be grateful.

In June of 1988, my class held a reunion at Woodstock for the twentieth anniversary of our graduation from high school. We sent invitations to over a hundred people who had been in our class at some point during our twelve years. Our graduating class was fairly small—only forty—but it included twenty-nine of us who had started in first grade together. Twenty-two of us who graduated together came to the reunion; four who had left in either tenth or eleventh grade also came back, for a total of twenty-six. With wives and kids, there were over eighty people.

The reunion was ten days long with a core of five days. Those who had planned to come just for the core of five days in the middle ended up staying for several days after. We had a wonderful time! I brought my family, since we live here in Kenya and it's just a little hop across the Indian Ocean from here. My wife would tell you that she felt warmly accepted and included. In fact, even the spouses who were afraid they would feel "out of it" just loved it and were very glad they came.

The coordinators of this ICMK conference thought it might be useful and instructive to see what sort of vocations and careers our class had twenty years after graduation. I will report that information, but first I would like to make several other comments.

First of all, we had a guidance counselor at the school, but his job was mostly helping us choose a university or college. Out of forty graduates, thirty-nine of us went on to some form of higher education. One woman took a two-year course to become a licensed practical nurse; three went to what are considered Ivy League colleges—Harvard, Yale, and Vassar.

Second, about the types of occupations: I have heard that a high percentage of missionary kids go into a service-related occupation, such as doctor, dentist, counselor, missionary, pastor, or teacher—someone who has a lot of professional interactions with other people. This description seems to be true of our class.

Third, you also need to realize that when my class was at Woodstock in the '50s and '60s, India was an extremely poor country, not what it is today. Since then there has been an economic revolution in India. In those days, India could not feed itself, and was considered an underdeveloped country. Today, even though there are some major problems in the subcontinent of India, it should no longer be described as an underdeveloped country. There is a large and growing middle class.

As we were growing up, we were very aware of the poverty all around us. Even though our parents' salaries were nothing terrific when they were compared with the local scale, they looked pretty good. I didn't realize how poor we were until I started college and received just about every grant available because my parents fell below poverty level income!

I have noticed two trends among my classmates. There were some who did, in fact, feel financially deprived. Their vocations seem to indicate that they were determined to make up for it, and they did. However, most did not feel deprived. Most seemed to have had a rather good sense of balance economically, and generally approached life in a non-materialistic way. However, all of my classmates, regardless of whether or not they felt deprived as children, seem to be very frugal today. Whenever I'm traveling around and have the opportunity, I stop in and visit some of the men, some of whom are very wealthy today. We usually go out to eat Indian food. I've noticed that most of them, particularly those who are now wealthy, meticulously go through the bill to be sure they weren't charged for something they didn't order, and they seldom give a tip which is more than ten percent!

It's also interesting to note what vocations people in my class seemed to avoid. There are very few in government service; I think there is only one person in Alaska working for the state in some aspect of social service. And even though the school had a strong emphasis on music, art, and drama, I know only one classmate who is in this field, who I will describe later. As I look at the classes two or three years before and after mine, I don't know of a single person who has a career in music, drama, or art. Also, there is nobody that I know of who is in an occupation that would be considered menial labor. My wife observed that most of these adult MKs seem to have occupations which require a fairly high degree of education.

My last general comment is that there has been very little study done in career patterns of missionary kids. After I agreed to give this presentation, several friends helped me search for research. They only found one paper available in the United States on this topic, and it was dated 1969.

Let's look at some general categories of occupations from this one class of forty people. The largest group are missionaries today, since nine are currently missionaries. In addition to the nine, there are two who were missionaries for a while but who have moved on to other vocations, and one who is ready to return to missionary activity again in a different capacity. This means that approximately twenty-five percent of the class is in some kind of full-time missionary or ministerial work.

The next largest category is teachers. There are four in that category, including one who is a university professor. Four others are in the area of forestry or wildlife conservation. Another four own their own businesses, ranging from auto repairs to construction. Two are in the medical field, one of whom is a doctor. (Incidentally, three others are married to doctors!) Two are in a mechanical or technical field, such as jet aircraft mechanic. Two are lawyers. A number are homemakers, and some are in other occupations. If you add all this up, it doesn't quite total forty, but that is all the information I have.

If you look at the highest level of education attained by these forty people who graduated in 1968, ten went on for master's degrees; two have Ph.D.s; and one is an M.D. This adds up to approximately thirty-three percent with graduate or advanced degrees.

Financially, two are very wealthy (meaning they are millionaires); two others married people who became very wealthy through businesses of their own; and one married a woman who had a considerable amount of family money. This means that approximately twelve percent would be considered wealthy. I believe that only one percent of the general population of the U.S. would be in this category. I doubt that this would be typical of all MK school graduates, but it was the case for Woodstock, Class of 1968.

I would like to give you glimpses of two rather unique individuals who have equally unique careers. One was the son of Australian missionaries. He had a sharp wit and an extremely sharp tongue to match. Four different people in our class said, "If he comes, I won't." He came, and they didn't! He spoke three different Indian dialects fluently, and after college he joined UNICEF and worked in India for approximately ten years. The thing that probably undid him was his battle against waste and corruption. Finally he left and started his own relief and development agency, which today has 200 employees and an annual budget of approximately six million dollars.

The second person I'll describe started at Harvard, and after one and a half years he said, "What am I here for? I quit!" He returned to India, and for five years he taught in a rural school. On weekends and sometimes even during the week, his chief form of entertainment was to go to the local cinema and watch all the Hindi flicks. After five years, he had

the pattern down pretty well—if you’ve watched many Indian movies, you know they’re all very similar. He saw a notice in the newspaper of an audition for the Indian Institute of Film and Television. He thought, “Well, that’s a likely career for me,” so he signed up for the audition in New Delhi. The Institute is very selective, and when he showed up, there were 800 people applying for only two slots. All the other applicants were dressed up as though they already were film stars, but he said, “Well, as long as I’m here I’ll go through with the thing.” When he went to the audition, people there told him he was in the wrong place. He said, “No, I’m prepared to give this in Hindi. Really, it’s a mother tongue for me.” So, they let him give his little presentation.

They laughed so hard that he thought he blew it, because he thought they were laughing at him. Then later he was amazed to receive a letter in the mail notifying him that he was one of the two accepted by the Indian Film and Television Institute. He finished their three-year course and went on to act in Indian films. He now does fifteen to twenty films a year.

This fellow also has a very sharp brain—he was second in our class—and his particular field of interest is sports, particularly cricket. He’s an expert on cricket; there’s nothing you can ask him about cricket that he doesn’t know. He now has a column in the magazine in India which would be comparable to *Sports Illustrated*, and he’s becoming quite well known as a sports writer. Someone who currently has kids at Woodstock mentioned to me that there was a *New York Times* article about him earlier this year.

So there you have it: one class, twenty years later.

*Comment from host Jim Lauer:* MKs have dreamed up more unique job opportunities than you can imagine. My favorite story is about the one who decided he liked scuba diving so much he figured out a way to make money with it. He ended up in the area around Dallas, Texas, retrieving golf balls from the ponds in golf courses. He made about twelve to fifteen thousand dollars every summer doing that! We all laughed about it, but he was doing great.

Based on a presentation at ICMK Nairobi, November 1989.

## 17. *A TCP String of Five Pearls*

**William D. Taylor**

The twenty-five of us sat in a circle, each holding his own “memory bag.” It was a winter day in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the borrowed school room was chilly, but our warm group simply didn’t feel the cold. We were all third-culture people (TCPs). Most were missionary kids. We had lived a significant portion of our lives away from our “passport culture” in the culture of our parents’ missionary service. But we truly belonged to neither of these two cultures in the full sense of the word. That made us TCPs. Our ages ranged from 13 to 65. We had lived in many countries—Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Zaire, Ghana, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Brazil, or Lebanon, with our parents having served the spectrum of mission agencies. Yet we were bonded. We were with our tribe. We belonged to each other and clicked with each other. In the words of one young adult who explained to her parents why she chose the MK/TCP conference over another prized event, “Mom and Dad, these are my people.”

However, it was the memory bags that riveted our attention. We all held bags containing tangible proofs of our memories. We roared with laughter at some of the artifacts. We sat in holy silence as others spoke from the depths of their heart. We wept openly with those who shared their pain. It was a singular, transcendental experience.

My own bag contained items precious to me: a faded black-and-white picture of my first home in Turrialba, Costa Rica. My sister Grace and I first played in that weather-beaten wood frame home. Just one meter to the left stood the old building housing the church into whose members my parents poured out their first terms in the early ’forties. My bag also revealed my first passport. With visas, dozens of legal stamps and what seemed to be hundreds of illegible signatures, it still lives to me as an historic document tracing my travels through Central America. From my bag, I pulled out the letters written home from boarding school. I read one of my first lines, “Dear Mom and Dad. How are you?” and then I paused to ask my friends what followed, and in unison they chorused, “I am fine!” Most of them had written similar letters; mine was just a generation older.

But what was I doing “down under” with this choice collection of Kiwi TCPs? Well, it really started at the 1989 Third International Conference on Missionary Kids in Kenya. That conference radically impacted me, for it was late in life that I truly began to reflect on and evaluate my own MK experience. When a New Zealand ICMK participant invited me to visit their TCPs, my first reaction had been, “What do I have to talk about to other MKs?” But in time I sensed God uncovering memories, nudging me to speak from the fabric of my own personal and childhood family MK life, then as a parent of three MKs, and now as an observer of hundreds of TCPs from both non-Western and Western missionary families. Five key pearls emerged gradually as I interacted with TCPs. All five are central to our rich and complex identity: Memories, Transitions, Decisions, Processings, and Eternals. Let me slip them onto a golden chain of personal reality.

### ***Memories***

I hope most TCP memories are positive. But the reality is that they range from the wonderful to the extremely painful, with the whole range in between. All of us TCPs have had rough patches. Some of our clan, including myself, have glorified our MK experience, and I’ve had to work through my rosy-colored lenses. Our Christchurch seminar brought a veteran of the original China Inland Mission’s Chefoo School in China. She along with her five siblings had spent three years in a concentration camp during World War II and was separated a total of five years from her parents. Left with fragmented memories of her mother, and brutal memories of those China years, this dear woman of God sat with us primarily in silence. I knew some of her story and it definitely was not pleasant.

At our seminar I asked the participants to share their own prime memories. We laughed, listened quietly, and wept. One was a teenage girl who had recently studied at the Chefoo School in Malaysia, and what a world of difference between the two stories, the two schools, the two periods of history! What of the TCPs whose bruised memories have been suppressed, who choose to forget? We had one with us, a young adult who openly admitted he really had not wanted to come to the seminar because, “When I left Papua New Guinea I decided I would try to forget all those years.” Yet he was there, and even brought his own memory bag! What a painful price is paid when memories are blocked.

Memories. Before I began reflecting seriously on my own MK experience, my recollections were warm and positive. But then as slow, honest analysis began, it was clear that my probing had brought up bruises painful to remember. Gradually the healing of memories has begun its restorative work. So here I was, at the tender age of fifty-one, attempting to process my life.

A word of encouragement to TCP families. Be sure you are a talking family with an ambiance where all members are given space to share deep longing, memories, joys, bruises, and pains.

A word to mission agencies: provide optional opportunities for educating MKs, ensure the circulation of helpful articles and books, provide seminars focusing on family welfare, and dignify the wisdom of professional counseling or pastoring where needed.

### ***Transitions***

The entire human race experiences transitions. For most TCPs, the bold relief transitions mainly refer to that heavy word “departure”: from home culture to mission field culture; from home to boarding school; then departure from mission field culture to “passport culture.” Few remember the departure from their original home culture because they left at a tender age. Many were born on the foreign field. Not all of us went to boarding school. While I did attend one for only two years, my own children studied in an international Austrian school in Guatemala City. Their story is different. It was amazing to see the parallel boarding school stories of almost all of our TCP group. Some of them had traveled to boarding school at the age of six or seven. These memories for some were vague, for others still vivid.

Praise God for the more humane and biblical attitudes of missions today which rest the final schooling decision in the parents’ court. MK boarding schools are no longer our only formal education choices. Home schooling, correspondence, tutoring, national, public, and private schools all have their place, depending on the location and circumstances of missionary service. When my own children became school age, we had a variety of options right in Guatemala City, even though my old boarding school was still operating in the same distant, mountain city.

When is a transition healthy? When both parents are united on the transitions; when they have adequately discussed the decisions with their children, thus preparing them for the future; when both Mom and Dad take their children to boarding school, write them at least weekly and pay the price to visit during the school year.

Again the Kiwi seminar revealed the gigantic steps forward that missions have made in allocating resources and establishing healthy policies regarding family and MK schooling. We rejoice in these changes. But now, understanding the broader picture, I hurt more than ever for some of my Moody Bible Institute classmates who were shipped off by agency orders to mission boarding schools and then to mission hostels in the home country. From there, many went to approved Christian colleges or Bible schools and then some returned to their safe world of the mission field. A series of secure bubbles protected them from the real world, but left them dysfunctional—perpetrators of the unhealthy cycle.

The word of encouragement to TCP families: Transitions can be stepping stones to maturity and new stages of life, or they can be fraught with uncertainty and laced with pain. The key is the family culture and the agency support system which by a pastoral counseling policy strengthens family units. One word became clear from our teenage TCPs—when the time comes for them to return to their home culture to finish secondary school or to start higher education, the best transitions find parents joyfully returning with their kids and living together as an integrated family for a couple of years or more.

### ***Decisions***

We all make a myriad of decisions in our lives, but some TCP decisions stand out as the critical, cross-road ones. We all live with decisions over which we had no control. TCPs had no choice to be born or grow up on the mission fields of our world. They were there because of decisions parents made in the context of obedience and service. Parents made the decisions regarding our schooling and our major transitions. As dependent children we live with the results of those choices. If some results soured in the process, then each TCP has some further decisions. We can make deliberate choices to hold something against Mom and Dad, or perhaps the agency; or we can release them in

forgiveness, assuming that they did what they truly thought was right. Many times the third-culture person's anger is directed against God. This requires a similar, yet different, kind of release and acceptance of the Lord's healing grace.

Our Christchurch group grappled with various decisions. They saw the decision to come to faith in Christ as crucial, along with the later maturing decisions that came to grips with the sovereignty of Christ in their lives. Some spoke of decisions to rebel, to break the tightened noose of parental and evangelical subculture that had foisted on them such a negative perspective of culture and the world. I wonder if some of our MK dropouts are a product of this stifling, narrow world, and if so I wonder how to build bridges to them.

I asked our group how many of them had MK friends who had abandoned the faith. Almost all knew someone personally. As we tried to understand what had happened, two things became clear. First, while membership in a healthy missionary family provides a good atmosphere for positive spiritual decisions, each person is an individual with the right to decide for or against Christ. Second, we had to recognize the painful reality of many dysfunctional missionary families.

Another issue is career choice. A significant percentage of MKs become missionaries and I hope their decision-making process is a healthy one. Unfortunately, there is an unbiblical concept of vocation which posits Christian ministry as the prime career that God blesses above all others. This violates the Christian theology of work and vocation, and dumps a terrible load of guilt on TCPs who choose differently. We missionary parents should delight when our children choose any career in the will of God. All honorable vocations receive God's full blessing; the crucial issue is to experience the Lordship of Christ in every sphere, including the secular marketplace.

Studies show that many MKs enter the helping professions, probably because they grew up in a world where their parents were dedicated to a particular kind of helping. This is great news. Another good number enter other arenas of international work—foreign service, overseas teaching, or international business. Let us encourage a flood of Godly tentmakers to go into our world. Most TCPs will choose an uncomplicated lifestyle, recognizing the beauty and blessing of simplicity.

### *Processings*

The plural form indicates ongoing stages throughout life as we TCPs process our memories, our transitions, and our decisions. Consciously or not, we all must attempt to come to terms with our past. A young girl may express her pain in quiet tears in the night privacy of her pillow; a young boy may turn aggressive as his way to deal with his pain. A teenager returning to his or her “passport culture” which is now very foreign processes his hurt and anger in various ways, some of which are not healthy. Most will make the transition with some difficult adjustments, but will level out in time without getting into destructive behavior. Friendly peers can aid the transition to the home scene and help MKs process the change. But many times people reach adulthood before they are ready to face the past and work through their bruised memories into healing.

I recall a woman in her forties who had sat quietly in the back during all the sessions at another TCP camp, speaking little and reacting even less. After camp was over she asked for some private time, and as she started talking, she began to weep. Having grown up in Papua New Guinea, she returned home as a teenager, and it had been rough all the way. She had blocked off all of her memories and refused to process her past. When she heard about the TCP gathering, she dismissed going. “It’s surely not for me. I’m a grown woman with two sons, working on a busy farm. There’s no time for that foolishness.” But God had irresistibly and lovingly wooed her to the camp. The memory bags had cracked her own memory bank. Now she longed to wade through her attic where she knew some of her prizes lay hidden. For the first time in her life, she was processing her past and God was bringing restoration and healing.

I wonder how many in our TCP world have never dealt deeply with their memories, transitions and decisions? Surely the result of that unprocessed mixture of pain and joy cannot be healthy. What does it take to trigger a proper processing? Does it happen by itself, with or without the Holy Spirit? What kind of warm support groups exist to encourage this processing? What can parents of MKs do for their children when they have not processed their own pain? Can mission agencies offer sensitive aid? Some do, but many people simply live with unprocessed pain.

But what joy to see an adult come to terms with the memories. The processing may involve profound pain for TCP siblings, parents, and

other family. Yet the results of working through these issues can only be good, even for MKs who have departed from biblical values and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Perhaps as resolution comes, there will be family reconciliation and at the right time, spiritual reconciliation.

### *Eternals*

We Christians are bound and driven by eternal truths rooted in the reality of the unique God whom we adore and worship. My New Zealand TCP talks were based on I Peter. We discovered fascinating truths in that short letter as we read it from the perspective of Peter as a global nomad, a man who had experienced a series of major transitions stemming from radical commitment and obedience to God. As Peter wrote this letter, he processed for himself and his readers the guiding truths from God. He wrote to scattered believers whose faithfulness to their Lord resulted in forced moves into new geography and culture. They had to persevere and overcome. Yet, they also were chosen, selected by God and loved intensely.

And so it is for the modern TCP: scattered, strangers, yet loved by the sovereign God of history. Missionary children move cross-culturally because their parents are convinced that without Christ there is no hope for eternal salvation. The driving force for missions surges from the heart of a loving and seeking God, who has provided the solution for human rebellion in the person and work of Christ. That’s what must compel us!

TCPs, like everyone else, must come to grips with eternal issues. Some have rejected the Christian faith. For others of our kind, the jury is still out. I often pray: “Loving God, woo them back to you. Bring healing to heart, mind, body, and spirit.” As TCPs mature and move through adulthood they continue to grapple with the eternal realities just as Peter did in his letter. When his letter is read through this filter, it literally leaps out in new application to our subculture. How rich is the mystery of God! How wonderful then to see Christ as the ultimate TCP, with his own set of memories, transitions, processings, decisions, and eternal truths. Without the reality of the eternal truths, life has no meaning to us.

### ***A Word to Agencies and Supporting Churches***

Individuals, families, agencies and supporting churches all play critical roles in the TCP pilgrimage. I have focused primarily on the TCP, with tangential reference to family functionality and agency support systems. What more can agencies and home churches do for their missionary families? Here are a few simple ideas.

First, recognize the hurts and brokenness of the contemporary family, a condition that affects missionaries as well. Neither idealize nor deprecate the missionary family. There are no perfect families, and we must do everything possible to bring maximum health to our cross-cultural families. Second, home churches and agencies can assure that families in pain have confidential counseling resources available. While staff counselors may serve some missionaries, many families prefer an objective professional who is not beholden to the agency or church. Third, agencies and churches can encourage the development of field or home-based support groups that will allow parents in pain to find peer assistance. I have seen this at work in Australia, and it has met a critical need. Fourth, agencies and home churches must encourage the development of TCP-led support networks. Mu-Kappa and its Aussie and Kiwi counterparts are great resources, but much more can be done.

### ***Finally***

In 1988 in London, I stood before the tomb of David Livingstone. His heart was buried in Africa and the rest was embalmed for state burial in Westminster Abbey. His son, however, had left England, emigrated to America, and wrote his father a tragic letter in which he repudiated his father's faith and reported changing his name in order to sever the linkage with his father. Soon I will travel to Jos, Nigeria, and will visit a unique cemetery where 55 people are buried: 28 adults and 27 children of missionaries to Africa. Under a beautiful blue African sky, shaded by the giant mango tree, I will meditate, weep, and pray with gratitude to God for the eternal and for these servants who paid such a high price.

A TCP's string of five pearls: memories, transitions, decisions, processings, and eternal. Not always perfect or unmarred. They are often shaped into beauty and forged in pain, but always tenderly held in the hand of a loving Father.

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## 18. *Emotional and Behavioral Patterns of Adult MKs*

**David L. Wickstrom**

One of the rich aspects of my life is the opportunity to talk with other adult MKs and to share our experiences. It is also part of the work I do as a psychologist, as I consult with other mental health professionals and work in my private practice. It is out of these experiences that I share some observations. There are many commonalities in the MK experience, and several emotional and behavioral patterns can be seen.

One common observation is that “coming back home” to what others call “home” is actually leaving home. You leave a culture with which you are familiar, and when you go to your “home” country, it may be going for the first time, and you don’t feel at home. You don’t fit in with the cultural values or the expected behavior. MKs often wonder, “Why do people act this weird way?” And of course, those in the “home” country are asking, “Why does this MK act so strange?” There are often very different perceptions of appropriate behavior, and an MK may feel and be labelled as “different.” Using the United States as a frame of reference, some of the behavioral and emotional patterns may appear to be “abnormal.” But when we look at those patterns in terms of another culture, they may not be abnormal at all.

It is important to remember that, while some of these patterns may be troublesome, it does not mean that they are “bad” or “faulty” or “sick.” By describing them in terms of the U.S. culture, our intent is to help adult MKs adjust when they return to their parents’ passport country, because the majority of AMKs stay in their parents’ culture as adults. This is not to say that the “home” culture is better, but adjustment is necessary if one is to have a sense of survival.

When asked, “What is the most troublesome emotion you deal with?” most adult MKs say, “Loneliness and insecurity because of all the separations; the moving around; difficulty feeling settled.” Others respond, “Low self-esteem, not feeling like one fits in, not having anything to contribute, a sense of failure.” Still others struggle with hate

and resentment—hating the “home” culture and almost everything about it, including bigotry. Another common response is a feeling of shame because of being different. For others there is profound sadness from repeated losses, and often a sense of being an alien far from a secure group. Frequently there is a lack of self-confidence and clear identity—a sense of asking, “Who am I, where do I belong, what am I going to do?” Of course, these feelings often lead to discouragement.

For many adult MKs, communication is an issue. There are times when the best word for a situation is from some tongue other than English. Still other MKs struggle with fears—fear of the unknown, fear of things like kidnapping, fear of not knowing the rules. Many adult MKs want to be “normal” but feel that everybody else thinks they are different. Let’s explore some other emotions and patterns of behavior which MKs commonly exhibit.

### *Guilt*

Missionary kids can feel guilty about many different things: they can feel guilty for going back to the States and living in a country where they have lots of money when they know that the people back home—real home—don’t have much of anything. Many kids have a difficult time when they start earning money. Some feel guilty for feeling resentful or sad, or for leaving their home country. Some feel guilty for having resentment or anger against their parents. They may feel guilty that they are not serving more, or not going back to the mission field. Or, they may feel guilty for being overseas and not doing something back in the States when they could serve the mission community effectively in the U.S.

Surprisingly, many MKs feel guilty because they don’t mind being away from their parents. It’s true! People are told that parent-child relationships are very important and that we should have strong, close family ties. When MKs don’t have them they often feel guilty. But if they do feel close family ties and don’t detach themselves from their feelings of closeness, then when separations occur they are left with sadness. So they are caught between guilt, sadness, and anger.

Adult MKs often struggle with guilt and shame, though they may not have been aware of these feelings as children. At its core these feelings are often based on the perception of being different. “I don’t really fit in; therefore *there must be something wrong with me.*” They have different values, and different so often feels bad. To children, “different” almost always means “bad,” and the result is a struggle with guilt and shame, which may be expressed in many different arenas in life.

### ***Common Emotional and Behavioral Patterns of MKs***

There are many other emotional patterns and characteristics common to missionary kids. Some are described below; the description may or may not fit your personal experience.

#### ***Detached Aloof Pattern***

One frequently observed set of behaviors in adult MKs is the detached aloof pattern. They have been hurt many, many times and decide they are never going to get hurt again. The picture that is often presented is “I am independent; I don’t need anybody; everybody can rely on me, but I don’t need to rely on anybody else.” The person may be very friendly and easy to talk with, but even after spending considerable time, you feel you don’t really know who they are.

Many adult MKs have this detached aloof pattern, but it is even more common in adult MKs who attended boarding school as children and decided at some point, “I’m never going to get hurt again; I will be separate from other people and nobody is going to touch me. I am a rock that can handle anything.” And many of them do. They are successful, strong, and very good at what they do, but they are also detached and aloof—untouchable. On the surface they may appear very stable; below the surface the reality may be that they don’t let themselves feel.

#### ***Non-Assertive Pattern***

Another common pattern is being non-assertive. Assertiveness is often highly valued in the United States, and many MKs are uncomfortable with it. It smacks of self-centeredness, and it is often frowned on in church circles. After all, aren’t we to be like Christ—the servant of

all? However, Jesus himself said that if you ask you will receive, if you seek and keep on seeking you will find, and if you knock it will be opened. In effect, Christ says, “Come to me and tell me what you need, and I’ll meet your need.” And the psalmist declares that if we delight ourselves in the Lord, he will “give us the desires of our hearts.”

Healthy assertiveness does not conflict with the Christian values of letting other people have the best, or of giving to others rather than expecting from them. Those are good biblical values. But there is an unhealthy kind of non-assertiveness that says, “I shouldn’t need anything. I should not ask for anything.” Many adult MKs have an aversion to raising support, especially if the gifts of other people kept their family on the mission field. They want to be able to support themselves and not have to ask for anything. To ask smacks of dependency.

The non-assertive style of not asking for what one wants is often carried over into interpersonal relationships. Husbands and wives who are adult MKs may have a very difficult time saying, “I need this from you,” because to them it feels selfish. “I should be giving, giving, giving. That’s the missionary way, and I shouldn’t want anything in return.”

The problem with the non-assertive pattern is that it often leads to passive-aggressive behavior. When your needs aren’t met, anger is a natural response, expressed by saying, “That person wouldn’t want to give to me anyway; they’re mean and selfish.” Then the angry, non-assertive MK may treat the other in passive but biting ways, or withhold something because that person hasn’t given to the MK. But the MK may not have received anything because he or she didn’t ask! What a trap!

Adult MKs may have learned that attitude as they watched their parents give without asking in return. They may have decided not to admit to any needs, let alone ask to have needs met. This can be translated into a prideful and haughty spirit, feeling noble because one is giving, not needy. But God has put within us needs for relationship, needs to have others reach out to us and give to us. That’s why the body of Christ is necessary, to care for *one another!*

### ***Emotionally Repressed Style***

The emotionally repressed style is often seen in MKs and others who have experienced severe trauma such as sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, wars, military coups, fighting, or being evacuated quickly after witnessing atrocities. It can also occur in people who have endured frequent and lengthy separations from loved ones. Emotional repression means that feelings are kept under very tight control and one is not allowed to feel. It is a defense against emotional pain. “Don’t feel, and you won’t hurt.”

At a reunion of one missionary school, these patterns were being discussed along with the results of research regarding adult MKs. Some of the MKs at the reunion became incensed when they were told that they probably had experienced or currently experienced anger, sadness, or grief. They said, “Well, *we* don’t feel that! MKs don’t feel those kinds of things. If they do, then they are wimps and just need to trust the Lord more and quit crying over things that happened when they were kids.” But MKs *do* feel those things, and often they don’t think they are allowed to have those emotions, so they shut them down. It is a defensive reaction to the feeling of overwhelming pain.

I (the author) can remember deciding as a third grader that I would never cry again when I left my parents to go to boarding school. And I didn’t. After that it was very difficult for me to cry. The next time I can remember crying when I saw my parents leave was after I was married. My folks were going back to Africa, and I was afraid that I was seeing them for the last time. I didn’t know why I felt that way. Then my father started to cry. He was leaving two of his three sons in the States while he went overseas. When he started to cry, that gave me permission to cry, but it was still very difficult for me. I quickly shut the feelings down and got control of myself. “I shouldn’t feel those kinds of feelings.” That often happens when people who do not allow themselves to feel deeply their painful or negative feelings.

### ***The Special Person or Entitlement Syndrome***

The special person syndrome means feeling that we are different, special, or even untouchable because we or our parents are in the Lord’s work. When missionaries are on furlough, most congregations want the

missionaries to sit in front. Being a missionary is often considered the top echelon of Christianity. Often MKs are placed in front of people. When I was in sixth grade I was asked to go from school to school showing slides and talking to people about Africa. That’s heady stuff for a little sixth grader! Of course, there were questions like, “Did you see Tarzan? Did those pythons ever hug you really tight?” The questions became tiresome, but the attention contributed to a feeling of being special.

Missionary kids tell about other variations of the special person syndrome. For example, one MK told of being outraged that a teacher questioned something he said in class. The response internally, though not expressed outwardly was, “Well, of course I’m right. Who are you even to question me? I’m a missionary kid.” The implication was, “I know the answer to that question and can answer it better than you can. I have more experience because I have traveled overseas.” A kind of defensiveness can arise when the MK is confronted or criticized. It may be very subtle, but it’s often there. It may need to be acknowledged by many adult missionary kids.

### ***Get Close Quickly and Detach Just as Quickly***

Recently while eating dinner at a conference an MK friend said, “I can handle a close relationship for a year, and then I’m gone. That’s it.” She was talking specifically about dating. A lot of heads were nodding at that particular table.

Many MKs are adept at forming relationships quickly. They’ve gone from place to place to place, and in order to survive, they’ve had to form relationships. They’ve learned a lot about other cultures, and they know how to relate to different kinds of people. In most of the world, there is a much stronger emphasis on personal relationships and spending time with others, compared to the United States where we value individuality, doing your own thing, and productivity. Many missionary kids can establish relationships quickly, and they are able to speak on a great variety of subjects. They are trained to give, and to listen to other people. As good missionaries, they learned to draw other people out. Naturally, other people are often attracted to missionary kids.

But when they get too close, the MK says (inside), “Oh no. This is scary. I’ve got to back off!” And the other person wonders, “What happened here? I thought we were good friends.” The MK also asks, “What happened here? I thought we were good friends.” They don’t understand their own discomfort with forming a close and lasting relationship. They may draw the other person out, and they may have the skills to develop a relationship very quickly. But because of frequent moves, they have never learned to form a close, deep, intimate personal relationships over the long haul. Obviously, this pattern can cause problems when it shows up in marriage relationships.

### ***The Rescuer Syndrome***

Missionary kids often exhibit what may be called the “rescuer syndrome.” And no wonder! In many evangelical churches characterized by zeal for missions, the song “Rescue the Perishing” was often sung with great gusto. Missionaries are often very good at identifying others’ needs and responding “Let me help you.” That’s not a bad outlook! After all, Christ came to people who were hurting and constantly reached out to those who came to him.

Missionary parents frequently provide the “rescuer” model for their kids. Some missionaries are untiring in their efforts on behalf of the people to whom they were sent, and rarely turn away anyone who comes to them, no matter what time of day or night. At one time a popular missionary motto was “Burn out for Christ,” and many have done just that. Many MKs have developed the same values by imitating their parents.

The rescuer syndrome can produce a lot of good, but it can also be bad when taken to the extreme. We may feel overly responsible, and if anyone is hurting we may feel the need to help. If we can’t help, we may feel guilty or resentful. If the hurting person doesn’t want help but says, “Get out of here!” the MK may feel rejected and end up being the victim.

People can be described as falling into one of three categories: rescuer, persecutor, and victim. Missionary kids often get caught in this triangle because they are adept at picking out victims or people who are hurting. A victim can be anybody who is having a problem or difficulty in life, and MKs want to help.

A persecutor is any person or circumstance that puts another person into a victim position. The adult missionary kid may be a rescuer who tries to help the victim. There are good rescuers and bad rescuers; there are good bad victims; there are good and bad persecutors. Here are their characteristics.

A good rescuer is *asked to rescue*; he doesn’t necessarily ask to be a rescuer, nor does he seek someone to rescue. A good rescuer—if he is going to rescue—will find out whether the identified victim really wants help. A second characteristic of a good rescuer is that he will *not take more than 50% of the responsibility* for helping the victim get out of the victim position. A good rescuer is also usually thanked for the help they give. A good victim is someone who does not contribute to their victim position, who takes at least 50% of the responsibility for getting out of the victim position, asks for help, and then thanks the one who helped. A good persecutor can be any situation or person who inadvertently hurts someone, thus victimizing that one.

A scenario might look like this: An MK knows someone who has a drug problem. He or she goes to that person and says, “I know you’ve got a problem here.” What is the person’s response going to be? Frequently it is, “Not me! Who are you talking about? Get out of here!” What happens? The MK, who is trying to be a rescuer, is looked at by the victim as being a persecutor, especially when the victim says, in effect, “You are only adding to my problem.” And the victim may become very defensive and angry.

But what happens if they let the MK help? If the MK offers various ways of helping, and pretty soon the victim becomes clingy and dependent, then the MK begins to feel responsible and stuck. If the victim takes an overdose some day, the rescuer may end up saying, “I should have prevented this. It’s my fault!” And the MK becomes the one who is hurting—in essence a victim; and the victim has become the persecutor.

Let’s carry the scenario further. After overdosing, the victim ends up in the hospital, and the MK goes to the hospital to visit. The victim, who has come out of a coma, says, “Oh, I’m so glad you’re here, but why weren’t you here earlier? You should have been able to keep me from doing this!” Suddenly the MK feels like a victim again and says, “Oh, I’m so sorry I wasn’t there. I should have helped you. I feel so terrible.”

And the victim then responds with, “Oh, I didn’t mean to make you feel bad. I’m sorry.” Thus the victim moves from persecutor position to a rescuer position and now tries to help the MK victim!

What happens is a game of Round Robin with rescuers and victims and persecutors changing positions, wondering how they got into this mess. Well, a lot of it is because someone jumped in before finding out whether the victim wanted help, a common issue for missionary kids. (It is also one of the reasons why many MKs get into fields like psychology or nursing or the service professions. They are very good at pointing out needs and helping to meet them.)

The MK may burn out as a rescuer, perhaps by ignoring the model Christ presented. Jesus helped people, but he rarely did so without their seeking him or asking for help. When Jesus went to the pool of Bethesda and saw a crippled man there he asked, “Do you want to be healed?” Here is a man who has been crippled for many years. He’s sitting beside the pool, he can’t seem to get in the pool for healing, and Christ has the audacity to ask, “Do you want to be healed?” Christ was a good rescuer, and he demonstrates a good rescue, knowing that there many people who are really hurting but don’t want to be helped.

These are some of the emotional and behavioral patterns seen in adult MKs. But there are some other patterns as well which can be identified by the following list of questions. Most MKs are well adjusted and productive, but there are some patterns which, if identified and counteracted, can help MKs function even better.

### ***Missionary Kids:***

Do you judge yourself without mercy? Are you harder on yourself than other people are?

Do you have difficulty trusting?

Do you have difficulty feeling? Do you experience depression or numbness fairly frequently?

Do you take life extremely seriously? Do you have difficulty having fun? Do you feel more fulfilled when you are accomplishing something, so that having fun seems frivolous?

Do you have trouble with low self-esteem?

Do you have difficulty with close, intimate relationships?

Do you have trouble handling a situation or problem when you are not in control?

Do you have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility? That is, are you more concerned about others than about yourself, even to the point of neglect? Scripture says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There needs to be a balance, because MKs can harm themselves by demonstrating concern about other people, to their own neglect.

Do you have an excessive need for approval and affirmation from others? Do you have difficulty accepting it when it is offered?

Are you extremely loyal, even when loyalty is undeserved?

Do you often feel guilty about things that are not your fault?

Are you afraid of people, especially authority figures, and do you have extreme difficulty handling criticism?

Do you have trouble identifying your own needs and asking to have those needs met? Do you tend to insist on peace at any cost, even though the cost may be very high?

Did you marry someone because they had problems and that is what drew you to them?

Are you terrified of abandonment? Do you hold onto a relationship at any cost?

Do you have trouble experiencing God as loving, giving, trustworthy, and forgiving?

Do you have difficulty with shades of gray, tending to see things as black and white, either good or bad, right or wrong?

Do you have difficulty following projects from beginning to end?

Do you have difficulty feeling safe as an adult; do you struggle with fear and anxiety?

Do you express hostility and anger in devious ways such as sarcasm, criticism, back-biting, “helpful” comments, but lack awareness of your anger?

Perhaps these questions and your answers to them can be a springboard for understanding your own patterns and act as an impetus for

growth. If so, may that growth enable you to be more effective in living the life that God has called you to live and in doing the job that God has called you to do.

Based on a presentation at ICMK Nairobi, November 1989.

## **19.** ***Bruising: When Things Go Wrong***

**David L. Wickstrom**

About two years ago, my wife and I traveled to Africa. I was raised in Nigeria and attended Kent Academy and Hillcrest High School. I had often told my wife and family about being an MK and how it shaped me as a person. My wife really *couldn't* understand what I was saying until she visited Africa and learned more about what influenced me. Later we made a list of things about me that would have made our relationship a lot easier if she had known them fifteen years earlier! If you are puzzled about your mate who is an MK, I recommend a visit to the place where he or she grew up.

My experience as an MK was positive overall, and most MKs state that their experience was positive, but then we will focus on the difficulties—emotional and psychological bruising. Bruising takes place in everybody's life, because we all have needs which are never perfectly met. Missionary kids have no more difficulties than other people, but they have specific areas of vulnerability unique to their experience. People in the military, State Department, and international business community have similar issues.

### ***Why Are We Bruised?***

First of all, we are all bruised because we are fallen creatures. God created a world with no pain, where all needs were met. But sin came into the world; the result is we are all fallen people. We all *have* imperfect parents, and we all *are* imperfect ourselves. Neither we nor our parents will always know what we need or be willing or able to give it. And when we do receive from others, we often misinterpret what is given or the motivations of the giver. Why? Because we all are fallen.

Second, we live in an imperfect world with societal breakdown all around us—a world which is changing faster and faster all the time. Bruising is one result of radical changes which are impossible for us to handle adequately.

Third, all of us have unique, individual personalities, and an experience which is normal and easy for one child to handle can be devastating to another. For example, you can look at one child and say, “I wish you wouldn’t do that,” and the child breaks into tears; another child says “OK”; and another child ignores you and goes on doing what he wants. Each one is different and needs different treatment.

### ***Comparison of Emotional Lives and Physical Bodies***

One way of thinking about bruising is to compare our emotional lives to our bodies. Physically we have ways to handle and recover from injury. The same is true emotionally. The ways we find to handle emotional injuries are called defenses, and they are extremely important in facing pain. We develop them as young children, and they may or may not be helpful to us later. For example, think of a six-year-old child whose parents become missionaries. The child is removed from a familiar school and taken to another country, where everything is new and scary. First the child is placed in a national school near the parents—new people, new faces, new studies. Then later the parents are transferred to another location, so the child is in another national school. Then they are assigned to a remote location where the parents do home schooling. In a few years, the situation may change again.

What happens to the child through all these changes? All of us need close interpersonal relationships. But every move brings separation from friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and the resulting grief process is ongoing. If a child is moved frequently and doesn’t have enough chance to grieve, he protects himself from the pain of leaving by developing defenses. One defense is not to allow friendships to get very deep, or the person may become very clingy, leading to potential problems with intimacy. These problems may carry over into adult life, especially in marriage. The fear of getting close or being abandoned may produce behavior causing the loss people both fear and expect. These are examples of defenses which aren’t useful carried into adult life.

### ***Developmental Processes and Dealing with Pain***

There are other ways in which people react to pain based on normal developmental processes. For example, children think in black-and-white terms and tend to view situations and themselves as either all good or all bad. Also, children are very egocentric, thinking they cause things to happen. These thought processes may not be helpful in adult life. For example, if a parent gets angry or is neglectful, the child often thinks, “I’m very bad.” If a child is sent to boarding school, consciously or unconsciously he may think, “I must be bad, or there is something very wrong with me. Otherwise Mom and Dad wouldn’t have sent me away. They must not have wanted me around.” If people feel there is something terribly wrong with them—perhaps based on childhood experiences—they may develop one of the following styles:

1. They start *blaming other people* instead of taking responsibility for their own pain and their own actions. Some missionary kids get defensive and blame their parents or someone else, because that is their way of dealing with the pain.
2. Others get involved in *antisocial lifestyles*, often out of anger or out of the belief, “If I’m really no good, then I might as well act that way.” They may have trouble with drugs or with the law. Why? It was their way of coping with some of their pain.
3. Another way of dealing with pain is through *addictions*. There are empty spots in all our lives, and we often fill them with something other than a relationship with God or other healthy things. When we do that regularly, it can become an addiction. Overeating, sports, romantic relationships, and workaholicism are examples of things which may be used to fill life if one is afraid that interpersonal needs are not going to be met.

### ***Needs and Developmental Stages***

Another way that bruising may occur is when needs specific to developmental stages are not met. This discussion is based on the theoretical formulations of Erik Erikson who enumerated six developmental stages in life. Each stage forms the foundation for the next one; like bricks, they form a strong wall or a weak one.

The first developmental stage is from birth to 18 months, when a child develops what Erikson calls *basic trust vs. basic mistrust*. If children are given a lot of care, feeding, warmth, love, and emotional support, they will usually form a good basic sense of trust. If they are not fed adequately, not supported emotionally, are neglected or even abused, basic mistrust of the world and people develops.

In the course of normal life, there are times when children can be hurt very badly. If they have developed a basic outlook of trust on life, they can rebound and say, "I am sure things will get better." But if they have developed an attitude of basic mistrust, later on when things get difficult they may say, "I knew it. Life is always going to give me a raw deal. It always has. I can't handle it." So, some people have an attitude of "just getting through and surviving" because they don't really believe that they can obtain what they need. There is little joy and much pessimism in their lives.

The next stage, *autonomy vs. shame and doubt*, is from one and a half to three years of age. Here the child says, "I want to do it myself!" and tries to do things his way. The "terrible twos" are part of this stage. During this time parents really need to shape the child's behavior, giving guidance yet letting the child try new things and develop some autonomy. If the child has too much harsh control, he may begin to doubt himself or may demand his own way. Later, he may say, "My father told me I could never do anything right." If too much maturity is expected too early, the child may develop a sense of shame and a sense of doubt—more was expected than could be delivered.

On the other hand, if the child is given too much freedom with little control and is allowed to do things that are dangerous, he may begin to think he can do anything he wants to. But then he runs up against the harsh, cruel world, and ends up thinking, "Uh-oh. Maybe I can't handle life," and develops a sense of doubt. It takes great wisdom to guide a child at this stage.

The next stage, *initiative vs. guilt*, is from the ages of three to six years. The child is expanding and testing his wings, and also beginning to develop friendships. Up until this age, most relationships involve parallel play. At this stage skills for relating to other people are developed. Children want to do even more, and parents have to set

limits. If the child does not develop a sense of initiative—that he or she is capable of performing tasks that are given to him or her—the result is often guilt. This is also the stage, incidentally, when boys and girls engage in sexual exploration, and "play doctor," examining each other. Guidance needs to be given, but a very negative reaction from parents can later create a severe sense of guilt regarding sexuality.

During this stage, at ages four, five, or six, children are more verbal and are also much more active. They explore more and are always asking "Why?" If the parent's response is, "Oh, shut up. I'm tired of you bothering me," the child may conclude there is something wrong in asking why, thus limiting healthy exploration. At this stage, children are also very egocentric, and if the parent is angry or is going through a difficult time, the child can develop a sense of "This must be my fault. I am very bad." If parents divorce during this stage, a child may feel he or she caused it, and guilt may be carried over into adult life.

Missionary kids who have very busy parents may have the idea, "If I were really a good child, Mom and Dad would want to be with me. Why are they always working instead?" They may decide, "There's something wrong with me," and may act out accordingly. Or they may go into adult life with extreme guilt and shame or anger and resentment.

The next stage is *industry vs. inferiority*, ages six through eighteen. In this stage, relationships are developed as children learn give and take in their play. It is also the stage for learning skills—the tools of their particular culture. Schooling plays an important part. If a child is repeatedly called "stupid" or put down, he may internalize that he really doesn't have the capacity to learn skills, even though his school grades may be good and he may later make good contributions to the church and workplace. If children receive encouragement and affirmation they need, they learn how to live: how to relate to others meaningfully, and how to develop the skills necessary to be effective.

The implications of this are tremendous. If parents are critical or overbearing, or if they give little reinforcement, guidance, or consistent discipline, children may develop a deep feeling of inferiority. Many people, including MKs, develop this. For example, what if an MK attends a boarding school where there are dozens of children cared for by only a few adults and controlled by an abundance of rules? How can

there be adequate reinforcement? The child may be very gifted, yet feel inferior, deciding, “I can’t do things right.” And the child may have difficulty believing the truth of a God who says, “I have gifted everyone, including you. You are gifted and loved and significant.”

The next stage is *identity vs. identity confusion*, ages eighteen through twenty-nine. While identity continues to develop throughout life, there is a major working and re-working of identity issues in the adolescent and young adult years. At this stage a person says, “This is who I am; this is what I want to be; this is what I want to do.” This stage is negotiated far more easily if the previous levels have been successfully completed. If the individual has a good sense of trust, a sense of autonomy, is allowed to develop initiative and the skills necessary for life, then that person can say, “I know who I am, and I know what I can do.” For many people, however, this stage evidences much confusion, as they change college majors numerous times and wander around struggling with what they believe and what they want from life.

MKs are often at one end of the spectrum or the other. The majority are very goal-directed and have a very definite sense of identity, while others seem to flounder. Some have taken being an MK as an identity. Instead of saying, “This is who I am and what I want to do,” they say, “I am an MK.” People don’t say they are an architect’s kid or a doctor’s kid or a factory worker’s kid, but many MKs use that identity to say who they are. It is an identity they are proud of, and a significant number of MKs live out that identity by becoming missionaries themselves.

The next stage, *intimacy vs. isolation*, occurs in adult life. If earlier stages have been negotiated well, people enter adult life and develop the kinds of intimate relationships necessary for fulfillment. If not, isolation is often the result, or there is a seemingly never-ending search for an intimate relationship. Many MKs develop good intimacy patterns, but some become very isolated. They feel different or strange, and may pull themselves away, saying, “I’m just independent and self-sufficient.” They may fail to develop the intimate relationships they need because of bruising that has taken place over a lifetime.

### ***A Word of Warning***

It is important to sound a note of warning. In many Christian circles there is an emphasis on what “God can do for me”. When people come to Christ they become new creatures, and Christ is in the process of making them whole. Some conclude that as a result, they will not have the normal problems that non-Christians have and will escape the pain of bruising. Missionaries might pray, “God, we have committed ourselves to your service; please protect our children from bruising.” God does indeed give grace, but being a missionary’s kid does not exempt one from the pains and struggles of life. Christians die of cancer; Christians have broken legs; Christians have emotional problems. If a child is not given adequate encouragement, guidance, and discipline, that child will develop inadequate boundaries whether that child is a Christian or not. And being an MK does not give special privileges. It is very easy to develop an attitude that God owes us. “Lord, I’m a missionary’s kid! My parents served you. They sacrificed and one of those sacrifices was having to make educational choices for us as kids, but, Lord, I had to suffer as a result of that, too. Now, don’t you owe me a little?” The attitude may be subtle or masked, but it is often there.

What God does say is, “I will never leave you nor forsake you. In the midst of your bruising, I will be there. And know that I’ve been bruised, too!” The Son of God himself was bruised. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Christ does understand us, and we can count on him to be with us even in the deepest valley.

### ***Three Levels of Longings***

In his book, *Inside Out*, Larry Crabb addresses the feeling that our spiritual life should take care of our emotional life. He talks about three different levels of longings or needs. The first one he calls *casual* longings or needs. These longings are not really all that important to us, and we can deal with them pretty easily when disappointed. For example, if a person wants chocolate ice cream but doesn’t get it, no big deal.

The second level is *critical* longings, such as the need for good interpersonal relationships and the sense that one can contribute some-

thing to the world. If these psychological needs are not met, there can be much anguish or pain. If a person does a job well and nobody acknowledges it, that can be painful. If a person wants and needs a close relationship, but that need is not met, it is painful. Some people approach midlife having wanted very much to get married and have children, but they haven't. There can be a lot of pain associated with that.

Critical longings are evident at a very young age. For example, if a four-year-old child is lost in a department store, the anguish can be intense. People who have experienced loss through repeated separations with adequate opportunity to resolve it may experience deep and ongoing anguish and pain because critical longings have not been met.

There's a third level that Larry Crabb calls *crucial* needs. Our most crucial need is for a close and healthy relationship with our God, the Creator of the world. We sometimes try to meet that crucial need by filling our lives with people or things—material things, events, travel, food, substances. However, it is impossible to meet the crucial need for an intimate personal relationship with God by filling our lives with people. They can help, but our ultimate need is for close personal communion with God. By the same token, though, being in a close personal relationship with God does not meet all our critical needs. The two great commandments are, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength, and mind,” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Both of these needs are vital; one is *crucial* in Crabb's formulation, the other one is *critical*. If we have an empty spot in the area of interpersonal relationships, we can't fill it simply by going to God. People can spend time with God every day but still be lonely and bruised because they need other people.

### ***Symptoms of Unhealed Bruises***

What are some of the symptoms or signals that a person has bruising which has not been healed? Esther Schubert, a psychiatrist and adult MK, talks about “Four Discrepancies.”

1. When we experience *emotions without a known cause*, something is getting triggered which may be the result of bruising. There may be times when a person experiences a real sense of pain and doesn't know why. For example, a pilot during the Vietnam war heard the news

about the fall of Da Nang. All of a sudden, tears came like a flood, and he cried for hours without understanding why. Finally, he realized that he had never grieved over Vietnam and what he had seen there. Later he was able to put into words, “I had walked those streets. I knew some of those people, and it hurts me deeply.” His emotional reaction was triggered by something he had not been aware of.

Or a person may start feeling depressed or sad for seemingly no reason at all. For example, more than one adult MK becomes very cold, mechanical, and detached when he has to take a long trip and leave his wife and children. What is triggered may be the defense mechanism which was developed to deal with the pain and loss of multiple separations from his own parents as a child. Emotional reactions of great intensity or without known cause usually indicate an unresolved early childhood issue.

2. *Physical illness without a physical cause*, or a psychosomatic problem. A person may have various vague pains that no one can fully diagnose. Of course there can also be undiagnosed exotic or tropical illnesses that doctors have no experience with, but often when there is a physical illness without a known cause it indicates some kind of unresolved, hidden issue.

3. *A discrepancy in intensity*, such as a hundred-dollar temper tantrum over a five-dollar offense. If a person gets extremely angry at something, and the intense reaction is much more than what would be expected, it is important to look for the trigger. For example, an MK may learn over the years to keep feelings under control. Then after marriage, a spouse will say, “I don't like the way you said that.” If the MK reacts by getting extremely defensive or by wanting to run away and never come back, the trigger may be based on an early experience of being left at boarding school after a day when the parents were displeased. The reaction may be completely out of proportion to the current marriage situation, and it may be related to a long-forgotten incident from childhood.

4. *A discrepancy between facts and feelings*. One MK told about planning to visit some people in Taiwan. They had told her they would have a three-bedroom apartment and she could stay with them. Before leaving for Taiwan, she wrote them a letter and asked if everything was

ready. They wrote back a very apologetic letter saying, “We weren’t able to get the three-bedroom apartment; we only have a one-bedroom apartment, and we will have other guests, so you won’t be able to stay here.” The *fact* was there was no space, but what she *felt* was that they didn’t want her. When there are unconscious issues, the facts may say one thing, but feelings can be very, very different!

5. An additional discrepancy not mentioned by Esther Schubert is: *A discrepancy between perceived reaction and actual reaction.* A missionary kid was in a therapy group when someone expressed some very inflammatory opinions. The MK became very very angry, and everyone in the group knew it. Someone said, “You’re angry, aren’t you?” And the MK responded, “No, I’m not angry. You can believe whatever you want.” The other person asked, “Then why are your fists and teeth clenched, and why is your face getting red?” What happened here? The MK had grown up believing that he had to be perfect and that if he expressed anger, there would be severe punishment. So, any time he started to get angry, he just shut it off. He didn’t even realize that he was angry and didn’t believe his anger was observable.

Other MKs may not be aware of the sadness they feel. Before they leave on a trip, a spouse or a friend may say, “You’ve got this drawn look around your mouth and face like you’re about to cry.” But the MK may be unaware of it and may have grown up believing he or she wasn’t allowed to feel sadness and was supposed to be strong and unmoved by pain. That is a discrepancy between a perceived reaction and the actual reaction.

### ***Bruising Affects the Handling of Emotions***

Besides these five discrepancies, there are other ways that bruising affects the way MKs handle emotions. There is a high incidence of *burn-out and depression* in missionaries, and some of the most tireless workers are the ones who have grown up on the mission field. Sometimes bruising from their past drives them; they feel they have to prove themselves, and as a result, they get burned out or depressed. Also, depression may be triggered by a separation if there is too much pain associated with it.

Another area is *intimacy problems*. At one extreme, there is the very independent person who doesn’t seem to need anybody, and at the other extreme, there is the very dependent, clingy person who is constantly looking for approval and nurturing. The parents may have been very busy, working hard for the Lord. Busyness is prevalent now throughout the world, with a heavy emphasis on performance and productivity, and as a result nurturing is lost. Then, when the children of these parents become adults they may experience depression, burnout, or intimacy problems.

*Fear and anxiety* are other symptoms. Fear usually has a known cause, and anxiety may be more diffuse or generalized. A person can have a fear or phobia of snakes yet function very well if there are not snakes around. Or, a person may be very anxious about life but not have a particular phobia. There may be things in a child’s life which engender fear but no way to deal with them—no one to talk to or help them handle the fear. In adult life, the result can become generalized anxiety, or sometimes panic attacks.

*Low self-esteem* also occurs, often in the Christian world. People are often told not to boast, so they don’t let others know of their strengths. If someone receives a compliment, he or she may say, “It wasn’t me. The Lord did it.” But the apostle Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” The word “I” is “ego” in the Greek. God works in us, and we also have a part in the performance of the task. Instead of saying, “The Lord did it,” we can say, “Thank you, and I know the Lord helped me do it.” Low self-esteem causes some people to feel that nothing they do has any merit or value. Since they believe they can’t accomplish anything, they don’t try. The result is often that the Lord’s work suffers because gifted people are not doing what they can do.

### ***Sources of Bruising***

Let’s consider some specific sources of bruising in missionary kids. These are not true for everybody, but many MKs have experienced them. One of them is *multiple separations without being able to resolve the separation and grieve over it*—to talk it out, to cry, to settle it in one’s mind. A child is away from Mom and Dad for the first time. He or she

cries, but there is no one to spend time nurturing and comforting. Someone may even tell the child to shut up, and he or she soon learns that grieving is not permitted.

Multiple separations also take place, without having time to grieve because of the fast-paced world in which we live. Missionaries often travel thousands of miles in a day, moving quickly from one culture to another. Family and friends have been left behind, and there has been a whirlwind of activity ever since the missionary received the appointment.

When is there time to grieve? The missionary may feel exhausted and/or depressed, not realizing that grieving takes time and energy, and unprocessed grief often leads to exhaustion and depression.

Another source of bruising for MKs has been *traumatic situations*. Revolutions, wars, observing atrocities, going through military coups, having national co-workers and friends murdered, all produce intense pain and leave scars. As a result the MK may shut down emotionally in order to deal with the pain, and bruising takes place.

Another source of bruising is *sexual abuse*. There is a much greater incidence of it among missionary kids than most people know. Sexual abuse is any sexual contact between an adult and a child, or between a teenager and a child at least five years younger, or between an older child and a younger child when the older child has been placed in authority. It is not limited to sexual intercourse but may involve sexual touching, fondling, oral sex, or pornography. Many people who have sexual difficulties in marriage had some unwanted and usually hidden sexual contact with an adult or older child when younger. For example, when there has been sexual contact between a teenager and a younger child on a mission station, how does the younger child tell the parents what the teenager has done? If the child talks about it, the teenager may be severely reprimanded and the family sent back to their home country.

Threats may have been made if the child tells. An adult who molests a young girl may threaten, "If you tell, I'll say you are lying, people will believe me and not you, and people will know you did a bad thing and are a bad girl." Or the adult may threaten the child with punishment or death. How does a little child deal with that? She often develops a deep sense of shame: "I'm bad. The adult knows what is good. I must be the bad person." The child may grow up with the sense

of being very, very bad and may either act out sexually or have difficulty with sexual intimacy in a legitimate context.

This happens much more frequently than most people realize. In the United States, the currently accepted statistic is that one out of four women were sexually abused as children, and it is unrealistic to think that missionaries and MKs are exceptions. If a child suddenly develops symptoms of sleeplessness or withdrawal, seems to have deep secrets that are not talked about, or suddenly starts acting out for no apparent reason, it is wise to begin to suspect bruising going on. It may or may not be sexual abuse. It is wise to spend more time with the child, asking her questions, finding out about her relationships with both children and adults, and both nationals and missionaries. It is important to be aware and to keep lines of communication open.

It is also important to know that for those who may have suffered from sexual abuse there is help available, and there is hope. Good professional and spiritual resources are available, and healing can result.

Finally, bruising is caused by *physical and emotional abuse*. Emotional abuse can take many forms. Children can be very cruel, even abusive if someone has a physical defect or noticeable feature—a high voice, large ears or feet, or a birthmark. Teasing from other children can result in feelings of something being desperately wrong. Abuse can also come from people in charge—teachers, staff, houseparents, other missionaries or nationals with whom the child comes in contact. Often overworked and under pressure and stress, these adults may lose control, call children names or criticize them, and bruising takes place.

*Physical abuse* does not refer to a spanking that is deserved and administered under control. Some of what was considered acceptable corporal punishment a generation ago was actually abuse as it is understood now. Much pain is associated with physical abuse, and the child almost always thinks he or she is at fault and that abusive adults are right to be doing whatever they are doing. Physical abuse can also take the form of shaming. Making a public display of a child who wet the bed is severely shaming and devastating.

### ***Learning to Deal with Bruising***

How do kids deal with these experiences? Very often what they do is repress or deny them. They may shut down and not allow themselves to feel pain or grief. They may not feel much joy either, because repressing one emotion acts as a blanket for other emotions. Defense mechanisms may become deeply entrenched. In order to deal with bruising it may be necessary to talk it out at length, perhaps with a trained counselor.

Christ is also a resource throughout the process of working through the effects of bruising, and he is committed to our growth and maturity. It is also crucial to remember that *we are not alone* in being bruised. Abuse, neglect, overwork, separations, parents who work too hard—these are common to people the world over. We all have these experiences to one degree or another, and all of us have been bruised and need to be healed from unhealthy patterns. We need to be gentle and understanding with ourselves and each other, giving grace and forgiveness where needed and dealing with ourselves and one another with kindness and compassion. As Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.”

Based on a presentation given at ICMK Nairobi, November 1989.

## **Part IV:**

# **Resilient Families**

Resolution V

***Strengthening Families***

Whereas we are all commanded in Scripture to encourage and build up each other, and

Whereas ICMK has increased our awareness of the special needs of missionary families,

We, the delegates of ICMK Nairobi, commit ourselves to implement ministries of encouragement to missionary families both when the children are young and when they are adults.

Resolution VI

***Healthy Development***

We, the delegates of ICMK Nairobi, commit ourselves to developing and supporting programs which enable MKs to develop maximally their intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual capabilities, and witnessing to the world of God's love, grace, and provision.

Resolution X

***Support for Crossing Cultures***

Whereas among those called as missionaries are families who serve in cross-cultural settings, and

Whereas the missionary family is intended to be a visible demonstration of the effects of the Gospel and a testimony to the host culture, and

Whereas the necessary intercultural movement requires significant transitions in lifestyle and social relationships,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi acknowledge the importance of appropriate transitional assistance, counsel, and other resources for all members of the missionary family and covenant to encourage and support missionary organizations in the further development and delivery of such assistance.

## 20.

*Raising Resilient MKs***Diane Morris**

When a young boy went hiking with his grandfather one day, they came upon a cocoon swinging back and forth wildly on the branch of a nearby bush. Entranced by the chaotic motion of the cocoon, the young boy took out his pocket knife and slit the cocoon. A wet, straggly butterfly fell into his palm, struggled a little and then ceased to move. “Grandfather, I freed the butterfly. Why doesn’t he fly away?” the young boy exclaimed in despair.

“Grandson, what have you done? The struggle the butterfly puts up to crack the cocoon strengthens his wings and makes him able to fly. If you take away his struggle, he will never learn that which makes him a true butterfly. It’s too late for this one. Next time observe and encourage; don’t do it for him.”<sup>1</sup>

The caterpillar struggling in the cocoon, emerging as a beautiful butterfly, is a wonderful picture of resilience and yet resilience seems too weak a word. It seems to have become a new buzz word in missionary circles because of the concern to strengthen missionary families. It seems, however, from reading the Scriptures and looking at the lives of missionary families who persevere in the midst of hardships, that it needs to be defined at a deeper level than the ability-to-bounce-back sense in which it is usually defined.

Webster defines resilience as “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change; capable of withstanding shock without permanent deformation or rupture,” with synonyms such as *flexible, hardy, tenacious, stalwart, faithful and valiant*. These are all good, yet they still seem to fall short of the Scriptures’ standard of going through the refiner’s fire and coming forth as gold.

The missionary community is indebted to Laura Mae Gardner, Wycliffe counselor, for her detailed work in this area. She defines resilience as “a luminous quality that requires a dark screen to bring its parts to life. Like courage, it shows up when situations are fearful. Like integrity, it shows up best in an atmosphere of corruption and deceit. Like

excellence, it is most startling when seen on a background of mediocrity. Like righteousness, it takes conscious effort.

“Resilience is an added component to health, one that is essential in those who live and thrive in cross-cultural ministries.... Health may simply equate ... comfort and adjustment. I believe a healthy missionary family must have and demonstrate the quality of resilience in order to remain stable, effective, and productive.”<sup>2</sup>

For the past two years, the annual MK Educators and Caregivers Consultation, made up of representatives of sixteen mission organizations, has concentrated on the importance of strengthening the missionary family, recognizing that resilient MKs come from resilient missionary families. The MK CART/CORE research has turned its emphasis from adult MKs to missionary families because research up to the present has shown that the higher the family relationships are rated, the higher the spiritual/emotional well-being of the MK.

But this does not mean becoming ingrown, neglecting the primary purpose of the Great Commission in order to focus on the family. The missionary task will always be to win men, women, and children to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If this is not done within the context of strong, healthy families, the declaration of the gospel will fall on skeptical ears. Dave Pollock illustrates this dramatically with a story from Kenya. During a meeting with missionaries and Kenyan church leaders, a missionary was mentioning the difficulties of being away so much in ministry when another missionary said, “But if we hadn’t done that, perhaps Kenya would not be evangelized to the extent that it is now.” The African bishop replied, “If you had come and shown us in the beginning how to take care of our families properly, we would not have to reevangelize Kenya every generation.”

Rev. Pollock quotes a leading evangelical from Latin America, “If Latin America needs one thing, it is the demonstration of a healthy family that bespeaks the reality of God. Psalm 78:5–7 reminds us that God “commanded our fathers to teach their children so that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” The proper response seems to be the sending of strong missionary families who both teach and model, within and without the

family circle, a vital, visible faith. This must be a faith that demonstrates the faithfulness and power of God through the transitions, troubles, and trials of missionary life, including everything from normal stress to coups or catastrophes. Dr. V. Raymond Edman, past president of Wheaton College, firmly believed that committed Christians should be able to go through trials not just somehow, but triumphantly.

### ***Building Resilience in Today's World***

The world today proclaims that we should never have troubles or problems. If there is physical pain, take a pill. If there is emotional pain, seek out a therapist. If circumstances get you down, change them. If there is stress on the job or in the family, discard one or both. Thank God for pills to relieve pain and for Christian therapists who help people work through damaged emotions. Let us not forget, however, that God never promised his people stress-free lives. On the contrary, like the caterpillar, we are reminded many times in Scripture that the struggle is the very means of growing godly character.

Romans 5:3–5 is one of the clearest statements to this effect: “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us.” The end result of suffering is not hopelessness but hope, and godly character is a side benefit! James 1:12 tells us plainly that the one who endures, when he is tried “shall receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” Romans 8:28–29 is not a Pollyanna “everything will come out all right” statement. It declares that “In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Verse 29, often left out of the quote, tells us that the purpose is “that we might be conformed to the likeness of his Son”—made to look like him, whose life was full of stress including both emotional and physical suffering. He endured for the joy set before him.

### ***But How?***

Martha Strickland of CB International reminds us that the desire to feel trim and fit requires the effort of exercise. “Unfortunately, our innate

desire to be comfortable permeates our lives and the lives of our children. In making educational choices for MKs, we tend to lean toward the comfortable, avoiding decisions that introduce challenge or any kind of hardship.”<sup>3</sup> It happens in the classroom when challenging students to think takes too much energy because they would rather do something fun. It happens in choosing curriculum because we naturally shy away from that which is unfamiliar or which requires a great deal of preparation. Martha speaks the truth when she says we cannot hope for strong muscles while avoiding exercise any more than we can hope for strength of character and resiliency in our MKs while protecting them from challenges.

Teachers and MK school personnel do have opportunity to incorporate resilience-building activities into the lives of their students but it happens much more easily if it begins at home.

### ***Essential Characteristics of Healthy, Resilient Families***

—A God-focused family living Deut. 6:1–7. Families who obviously love the Lord with all their hearts then teach their children. Faith in the person, the character and the power of the living, loving God must show in everyday family life. Their “personal relationship with God is central to who they are and what they do.”<sup>4</sup> Without this, the other ingredients lose their meaning.

—A strong father in the home and a strong father-child relationship. Too often, children of Christian workers say, “Father was there for others but not for me. Carol Herrmann, in her study of MK adjustment concluded that the best way for a father to care for his children is to demonstrate love for their mother.<sup>5</sup> The MK Cart/Core research came to the following conclusion: When the father showed either acceptance or rejection, it was more powerful than the mother’s acceptance or rejection.

—They work through stressful situations together. As parents learn to avoid a victim mentality and practice working through tough times along with the children, depending on the Lord together, the children will begin to incorporate that process into their own lives. Nick Pauls states, “What takes place in the family sets the course for what will continue to be.... The MK’s experience today sets the foundation for how he or she

will adjust to the changes or recover from the misfortunes of tomorrow.”  
—They live in an atmosphere of encouragement and affirmation, given in terms of who they are more than what they accomplish. There are creative ways of demonstrating this, both in the home and in the classroom. One family makes placemats or banners for birthdays, writing on them the fruits of the Spirit which they see in the child. There are many ways in which both teachers and parents can say, “We love you and you are important.” The story is told of the little boy who had trouble memorizing. When his class planned to do a play, he desperately wanted a part. The afternoon of the tryouts, his mother stood anxiously in the doorway, waiting to comfort him. To her surprise, he came skipping happily down the sidewalk. “Did you get a part?” she asked. “Yes!” he exclaimed. “I’ve been chosen to clap and cheer!” Smart teacher!

—They have developed meaningful family rituals. Having been released from the Nazi prison camp, Corrie ten Boom was once asked, “During your childhood years, did your father ever do anything that helped you in that difficult time of your imprisonment?” Corrie responded, “Every night, when he tucked me in, my father used to place his hand lovingly on my cheek. During those dark nights in prison, I would ask my Heavenly Father to place his hand lovingly on my cheek as my father had done.” Most families have some such rituals and they need to be continued on the mission field. This tells the children that, in the midst of many changes, there are some things that don’t change and they belong to us, just as we belong to each other. Many classrooms have also been knit together by rituals developed by a creative teacher. Celebrations, both planned and spontaneous, should be a major part of every family and classroom. They should be frequent and creative, expressing appreciation and affirmation.

—They show physical affection to one another. Carol Herrmann’s study on MKs strongly supported the premise that children who saw their parents showing affection to one another were more secure in their own emotional lives. Showing physical affection to children is equally important. Let us not forget how Jesus used the magic of touch with children, an adolescent and even adults. What can we learn from this?

—They have fun together. Are we fun to live with? To be with? Some of the most godly families are the ones who also have the most fun! This is also true of some of the best teachers.

—They know the meaning of gentle, but firm and consistent discipline. One of the requirements for Christian leadership, according to Paul’s instruction to Timothy, was that the children should be obedient and respectful. Respect is a missing ingredient in many families today. Both stability and trust are built into children’s lives by knowing what is expected of them and having the standard field firmly in place. A thought-provoking magazine article points out that a child’s trust is destroyed when he is told, “If you..., then I...” and the “then” doesn’t happen. At that moment, the child has learned our word cannot be trusted and we become guilty of emotional child abuse!<sup>7</sup>

Another part of discipline is developing a sense of responsibility and wholesome work, allowing the child to learn both the rewards of accomplishment and the consequences of neglect. When families live by principles instead of rules and every family member understands the principles behind the rules and expectations, discipline becomes less of a problem. When children are in control, they become extremely insecure because they instinctively know they are not capable of handling that much power. They will continue to push the boundaries until they hold firm and the ensuing level of family stress becomes explosive.

—They have, as a family, a deep sense of calling and commitment to the task. According to a study on missionary family adaptation, missionary families with a collective sense of meaning and purpose to their lives adapt better on the field. “For this reason, it seems important that missionary families take time to identify their sense of calling to the mission field *as a family*. This family calling would enable the members to have a shared belief that the experience of the stresses, strains and hardships of missionary life and service is insignificant in comparison to the glory of God being revealed in and through them to the world.”<sup>8</sup>

The MK Cart/Core researchers have also found that the adult MKs who felt they were a significant part of their parents’ ministries had, as adults, a greater sense of spiritual/emotional stability. Every effort must be expended, both by parents and by mission organizations, to keep missionary children from feeling they are tag-alongs to their parents’

ministry. One missionary family who has successfully brought their children “in” said that praying through the possibility together from the beginning made a big difference. Searching the Word together also played an important part as they enjoyed giving each other Bible verses that seemed relevant. “Once our boys felt they were invited into the call in these ways, no hardship, adjustment, hassles, or inconveniences seemed to trouble them.”

—They have meaningful family, as well as personal devotions. Children must know that their parents maintain a daily, deep, and personal relationship with God. Family worship should be creative, varied, and flexible, but not haphazard. Children will draw their own conclusions from the importance given to this part of the family schedule. For example, instead of foregoing prayer as a family after a late evening appointment, the family can pray together in the car on the way home.<sup>9</sup>

Many families use music, teaching, and discussing the words to meaningful hymns and choruses that coincide with current family experiences. Singing together often becomes part of their most treasured memories.

Memorizing Scripture together as particular verses meet special family needs is a great way to pass on the family faith. Reviewing favorite Scripture passages is an effective way of remembering God’s faithfulness and can have a lasting impact on the faith of each member of the family (Isaiah 38:19b). Clear evidence that family devotions are “taking” is when the family prays together at other times as well.

—They have learned the importance of delayed gratification and self-denial for the sake of future benefit for themselves or others. This element is one of the most glaring empty sets in today’s world. Elisabeth Elliot comments: “the earlier parents begin to make the laws of order and beauty and quietness comprehensible to their children, the sooner they will acquire good, strong notions of what is so basic to real godliness, self-denial. A Christian home should be a place of peace and there can be no peace where there is no self-denial.”<sup>10</sup>

Laura Mae Gardner speaks eloquently to this issue, “The hardy person does not insist on having all his needs met. He understands that going without won’t kill him. He is able to forego gratification. He

knows that Philippians 4:11—12 precedes Philippians 4:19 and he remembers that Jesus had unmet needs too.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***Implications for MK School Personnel and Caregivers***

Most of what has been said so far has been directed toward parents. While acknowledging that parents are, indeed, primarily the ones responsible for the strength of character of their children’s lives, there are ways that other MK caregivers can encourage and reinforce these elements of resiliency in the lives of those who are in their temporary care.

1. There are many opportunities for input into the lives of missionary parents, whether through parent-teacher conferences or in more direct counseling sessions. Parents are usually looking for tangible, practical ideas which they can implement in their own families. The family ingredients mentioned here can be shared spontaneously or deliberately, informally or formally, in part or in total, as the occasion allows.

2. MK caregivers can recognize the importance young people place on belonging and relationships. Dr. John Powell points out that, as Psalm 8 shows how significant we are in God’s eyes, “...so our children should be in our eyes and so our families should be in the mission’s eyes.” He gives the Three R’s related to a sense of belonging. People need to have a *response* from others. The need for *relationship* cannot be overestimated. There is also a need for *redemption*. When mistakes are made that hurt relationships, those mistakes need to be redeemed.

In this context, how can children be taught about making mistakes and be assured that they are still loved? Too often the confrontation process between young people and adults, whether parents, teachers or boarding parents seems to be more punitive than redemptive. One way to correct this is to keep discipline in the context of the Three R’s, remembering that Discipline without relationship leads to rebellion.<sup>12</sup>

3. Nick Pauls affirms the role of MK caregivers when he states that, along with parents, “MK caregivers also have a profound impact on MK resilience. They are the adults who have the privilege and responsibility that comes from spending significant amounts of time with MKs during

their formative years. Sometimes they are the only adults who are physically and emotionally close enough to the MKs to notice times of crisis or great joy in their lives. The way they respond has the potential of lifting or breaking the child's heart. The way they see caregivers adjust to change or recover from misfortune in their own lives will also be the model from which MKs will choose elements for their own lives."<sup>13</sup>

4. All MK caregivers can incorporate many of the family elements into their particular contexts. There are at least six of them which can be incorporated easily into classrooms, boarding homes, MK training programs, and other MK counseling situations. The most important task of missionary parents and all MK caregivers is to make God visible to children by reflecting him in all areas of life. Just as real estate agents declare that the three most important factors in buying a home are "location, location, location," so the three most important ingredients in raising strong, resilient MKs are modeling, modeling, modeling.

Wherever they are in the world, missionary families will face the trials of life. To welcome the refiner's fire because it brings us closer to the Lord Jesus is to have the faith of Job when he said, "when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). As MK caregivers, let us commit ourselves to implanting into the lives of young people those qualities which will enable them to become, as Oswald Chambers writes, "radiantly and joyously God's." This is true resilience.

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## 21.

### *Family Dynamics That Affect the MK*

**John Powell**

Yes, missions have dysfunctional families. Their members don't wear T-shirts emblazoned with a large "D," and many of their dysfunctional behavior patterns may be invisible to those outside the family. However, the behavior of children from such families often yields clues to family dysfunction. Such observations may provide an opportunity for intervention and eventual assistance.

#### *What Is a Dysfunctional Family?*

The term "dysfunctional" is a current "in" word in North American culture. Nearly any unusual behavior is an occasion to invoke the term. Buzzwords such as "ACOA" (Adult Children of Alcoholics) and "co-dependent" are often thrown around, perhaps doing injustice to the complexities and pain which lie back of their coinage in the first place. There is a growing awareness, however, that more and more families seem unable to meet the legitimate needs of their members and, in true American style, we have coined terms and concepts to describe them.

Coming from studies of individuals growing up with alcoholic parents, victims of abuse from family members, and others whose needs for healthy development were thwarted through inadequate parenting or pathological family behavior, the term "dysfunctional family" has been used to describe a range of backgrounds and behavior patterns varying in effect and severity. It has become overused so as to lack precise meaning.

Adult children of alcoholics (ACOAs) and victims of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse within the family can be clearly designated as coming from dysfunctional families. Others who have experienced a deficit in basic care because of some behavioral pattern or psychological pathology on the part of parents can also be seen as being from such families. Basically, the term implies a family whose dynamics are such that the legitimate psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of its members are not met. Parents are often implicated, but each member has some degree of participation.

The effects on children of such dynamics are detrimental to healthy behavior in relationships, view of self, and ability to live productive and satisfying lives. Their behavior is often puzzling or offensive to others. Sometimes the dynamics are quite subtle and become obvious only in closer relationships and under careful observation over time. However, these dynamics and behavior are unlikely to escape the caring and astute observer in the school situation, and this may be one of the first opportunities for taking steps toward intervention.

#### *Healthy Families*

Dysfunctionality is perhaps best considered in the context of healthy family functioning. There are five characteristics almost always present in a healthy functioning family. These are trust, openness, unity, interdependence, and love. The qualities of faith and hope can also be included for missionary families.

These qualities may vary by degree, situation, or time. However, there is a more or less abiding presence of them in the dynamics of a healthy family, and they show up in relationships, communications, and behaviors. Families with these characteristics generally meet the growth and developmental needs of their children and provide a safe and satisfying environment in which members can live, love, work, and grow.

Briefly, *trust* in this healthy family is built by predictability, kept promises, and fulfilled expectations. Honesty in communication about events, relationships, and feelings takes place. It is the sense, especially in children, that Mom or Dad will be there when needed and trusted to respond in a caring way.

*Openness* is shown in the willingness to disclose to one another, to be open to new experiences and events, and to receive from others expressions of joy and sadness, excitement and fear, or virtually anything one needs or wishes to express. This inter-family openness translates to an outward openness to others beyond the family. At the same time, boundaries are acknowledged and respected as prerogatives of individuals both within and outside the family.

*Unity* takes into account individual differences, prerogatives, and boundaries of each person within the family and respects individual

rights and responsibilities. The family is experienced as being the unifying force for each member within it and, as such, becomes a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Individual members are clearly committed to one another and others in positive ways because of their inherent family strength, yet have permission and encouragement for individual creativity and pursuits.

**Interdependence** takes into account the healthy ways family members need each other, but not in overly dependent ways. Children grow into this by moving from almost total dependence on parents, through a certain surge of independence, to a level of adaptability including appropriate interdependence. Ultimately, they become aware of meeting needs for connection with others in mutually responsible and satisfying ways. The healthy family models this.

**Love** is characterized by a healthy expression of putting others first without denigrating one's own view of and responsibility to self. It is the continual learning and putting into practice the joy of giving to others, and of knowing other family members well enough that what is provided is highly consistent with who they are and what they like and need. As this is experienced within the family, it readily translates in expression to those outside the family as well.

**Faith**, among other things, is the experience of knowing God as the creator and sustainer of life, and believing that he is ultimately in control. This fundamental trust translates into the daily communication and interactions with other family members in meeting the practical uncertainties of everyday life. It includes a faith that one can and will take individual responsibilities, that other family members can be counted on to be there for one, and that the Lord will provide strength and direction in times of stress, conflict, and uncertainty. It is experienced interactively, practiced in subtle and supporting ways, and seen overtly in discussion, prayer, devotions, and incidental instruction.

**Hope** is that characteristic of being able to see beyond the present and manifest an upbeat attitude even in times of disappointment or uncertainty. It is based on a foundational faith in and experience of Christ as the center point of the family. It is shown in practical ways with a lack of negativism and acknowledgment of present reality (no psychological

denial), and manifests a commitment to doing what one can in the context of a hope going beyond mortality.

### ***Unhealthy Families***

The three major features of children coming from dysfunctional families is that they have learned the dictums of ***Don't trust — Don't feel — Don't tell (or talk)***. While these may vary in degree, they have developed as important for psychological survival in such a family. It is easy to see that the dynamics creating this web of protection are the antithesis of those characteristics mentioned above. Obviously, a person whose energy must go into maintaining this internal stance of not trusting, feeling, or telling is going to be limited in relationships, opportunities for growth, and satisfaction. The pattern of protection is based on the need not to experience the full impact of dysfunctional patterns in one's family, and many growth opportunities are denied in the process. This will show up in the classroom and boarding home.

Characteristics of the unhealthy family producing such dynamics are: distrust, closedness, uniformity, dependence, passivity, fear and disappointment or despair. Utilizing these negative ends, we can construct seven dimensions which may be helpful in understanding healthiness or unhealthiness within a family:

***Trust vs. Distrust***

***Openness vs. Closedness***

***Unity vs. Uniformity***

***Interdependence vs. Dependence***

***Love vs. Passivity***

***Faith vs. Fear***

***Hope vs. Disappointment or Despair***

The unhealthy family often has a suspicious quality and clearly breeds distrust of one another in the family. This is often due to some unresolved conflict, negative behavior pattern, or pathological practice on the part of one or both of the parents. The pattern of distrust usually translates to those outside the family as well. The family is generally closed in its communication with and availability to others, and may

isolate itself from meaningful interaction with those outside the family. There is little opportunity for true expression of ideas and feelings within the family, and strong structures may require its members to maintain a certain image to those outside. Its unhealthy habits and patterns, often seen clearly by the children, must be denied within the family and protected from disclosure to others.

One or both parents may insist that the children adhere to rigid rules and that they conform entirely, often with threats of punishment or withholding of customary and healthy activities. There is little room for individuality or creativity, and individual differences may be ignored. Family dynamics often dictate that family allegiance always be put first in such a way that individual expression and creativity are thwarted and high dependence on the family is created. Children are denied the opportunity to pursue the usual developmental independence important to healthy growth and necessary for later healthy interdependence.

Love can be spoken *about* but not seen or experienced in *reality*. Many children's activities and interests are passively observed or ignored. Sometimes there is open hostility and inappropriate physical punishment, with "the Lord's work" often cited as reasons for neglect or lack of true involvement in children's needs and interests. It is not unusual for one parent to make unreasonable demands on the other because of his or her own unmet needs and unresolved conflicts. Faith may be given lip service, even buttressed by scriptural quotations or theological dogma, but it is lacking in practice. Scripture and theology may even at times be used to justify unhealthy family practices and relationships, and to thwart attempts at intervention or improvement. Lack of involvement and interest in children's growth and activities is the most important aspect of dysfunctionality here.

### **What School Staff Can Do**

**Build relationships with children.** School personnel, especially in boarding schools, are in a unique place to observe children's behavior and to form relationships with them that may be antithetical to those in dysfunctional families. The development of a trusting relationship where the child or teen can express his or her true feelings and concerns is a good beginning step. Many children, unable themselves to understand or

articulate the source of their distress, act out their distress and the family's conflict in the classroom or boarding home, often in symbolic ways. This may provide the teacher or boarding home parent an avenue for helping children put their distress into words. Some children, relaxed from family tensions merely by being in the presence of a loving and functional environment, may openly disclose aspects of their backgrounds which require attention.

**Build relationships with parents.** Using opportunities for building relationships with parents is a second important step toward intervention.

Taking time to establish your credibility before confronting them with unpleasant observations and challenges may go a long way in having your suggestions accepted. In fact, such relationships may help, as they are developed, to corroborate certain observations made earlier, and result in planning more effective assistance later on. Further, they may even, without the necessity of direct confrontation, result in cooperative activities and collaboration which prevents negative patterns from coming to fruition.

**Work in cooperation with concerned others.** It is always important to involve others within the school who have a legitimate interest in the child's welfare. This can be useful in confirming some of your observations, affirming your tentative conclusions about dysfunctionality, and developing a plan of discussion and assistance to the parents and family which has the best chance of success. There may also be a time when it is important to involve mission administration. In extreme cases such as alcoholism, child abuse, incest, and other more traumatic dysfunctionality, action must be taken in a loving way by the mission as well as the school.

**Be aware of your own dynamics.** Perhaps a good starting place for utilizing some of the above information for students under your care is to prayerfully consider your own family background. How did your own family fit on these seven dimensions? What helped you move from those areas that were more negative to those that are more positive? How does your own current family function? What might you do to make it better? As Henri Nouwen has pointed out, we are all wounded in our own way. Our task is to become wounded healers. Perhaps by being sensitive to

ourselves and our own family dynamics, we can be freed to be even more sensitive to others. Assisting even one person caught in the dynamics of dysfunctionality might help your year to be the very best!

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## **22.** ***The Importance of Fathers in MK Development***

**David L. Wickstrom**

One of the concerns uppermost in the minds of missionaries is the development and adjustment of their children. While this has always been a concern, it has only been within the last two decades that parents, educators, mission administrators, and researchers have focused their attention on the specific variables which contribute to healthy adjustment of MKs.

The three International Conferences on Missionary Kids, in Manila (1984), Quito (1987) and Nairobi (1989) involved hundreds of MKs, missionary parents and parents-to-be, mental health professionals and caregivers within the missions community. Articles in periodicals such as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, professional journals like the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, and books with collections of resources, have contributed greatly to our understanding of MK development.

However, little study has focused on the specific functions and roles played by individual parents. The purpose of this study is to bring together some of the available literature on parenting, especially the parenting role of fathers, and to delineate the ways fathers affect the development of missionary children.

### ***Mindsets and Presuppositions***

Let us consider some common mindsets about the importance of fathers. Mindsets or presuppositions are usually based on people's histories with their own fathers. An example is: "Well, of course Dad is important; he's my dad," without any acknowledgement of the roles he played or the influences he had. Another mindset related to patterns in U.S. society is, "Dad wasn't all that important; he was never here anyway, and Mom did everything for us." Or, some would say, "Dad was just as important as Mom because they shared the load equally," or

“Dad influenced me a lot—he played ball with me, talked with me, and took an interest in everything I did. I love my dad and he loves me.”

Mindsets and presuppositions may also be based on what people have read, have seen on TV or heard on the radio, or have been exposed to in school. Among Christians, many of the mindsets and presuppositions are based on a combination of personal experience, biblical teaching, personal reading, and perhaps a seminar or workshop on the subject. Unfortunately, not all Christian approaches have been adequately based on good biblical exegesis, or sound research and theory.

### Research

For many years research focused on the role of the mother in child development. Mothers have provided the bulk of time with and care for children from birth through the early years, especially in the traditional nuclear family, in which the father went to work and the mother stayed at home. Early psychological theory placed great emphasis on mother-child interactions with the mother as nurturer and primary caregiver. It was not until the 1960s and early 1970s that research began to focus on the role of the father. Only recently, in the 1980s and 1990s, has the impact of fathers been more thoroughly investigated.

The “absent father” phenomenon in our society, coupled with recent attention given to its effects, has resulted in startling statistics reported by U.S. government studies as well as sociological and other studies. The incidence of poverty, teen pregnancy, premarital births, crime, psychological problems of children, and suicide is dramatically higher for children with absent fathers than for children with two active parents (See chart on page 1988). Fatherless children are most commonly found in single-parent households headed by unmarried women.

Few missionary children are raised in single-parent homes; however, there may be dynamics similar to the “absent father,” because the father travels a great deal or because his work occupies almost all of his time, energy, and attention. Even when the father lives under the same roof, there may be a sense in which he is absent if he is not able to focus attention on his children. This phenomenon is very common among two-parent families in the U.S. when the father has a very demanding job or career. The years in which young adults focus intensely on skill develop-

ment and career advancement often coincide with the years when it is most important for children to have active, involved parents.

## How Important Are Fathers?

### Poverty:

- Fatherless children are five times more likely to live in poverty than children living with both parents. (*Survey on Child Health*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)
- More than 90% of the current AFDC case load is made up of absent-father families. (*The Green Book*, Committee on Ways and Means)

### Teen Pregnancy:

- Women reared in single-parent households engage in sexual activity outside marriage much more often than young women reared in intact families. (Miller and Bingham, “Family Configuration in Relation to the Sexual Behavior of Female Adolescents” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 51, 1989)
- Teen boys from one-parent households are almost twice as likely to father a child out of wedlock as teen boys from two-parent families. (Marsiglio, “Adolescent Fathers in the U.S.” *Family Planning Perspectives*, Nov/Dec. 1987)

### Crime:

- A young male is twice as likely to engage in criminal behavior if he is raised without a father. (June O’Neill, *Congressional Record*, August 8, 1995)

### Psychological Problems:

- Children from absent-father homes, whether through out-of-wedlock birth or divorce, have substantially higher rates of depression, anxiety, moodiness, and phobia than their peers. (Research summary in *Father Absence: A South Carolina Crisis*, Palmetto Family Council, 1997)

**Suicide:**

- Although youths may attempt suicide for a variety of reasons, research clearly indicates that those from father-absent homes are much more likely to attempt suicide than their contemporaries from two-parent families. (*Father Absence: A South Carolina Crisis*, Palmetto Family Council, 1997)

**Research with Missionary Families**

Little research has been done with missionary families. A study was done in 1975 by David Wickstrom which focused on the relationship between the ages missionary children were in boarding school and their self-esteem as adults. The study showed that self-esteem was not significantly affected by boarding or non-boarding, but it *was* significantly affected by relationships with parents. The more that parents communicated loving acceptance, the higher the child's self esteem. The higher the degrees of excessive control—either punitive control characterized by physical punishment or psychological control using fear, guilt, or shame—the lower was the child's self esteem.

Wickstrom's study showed that there were also correlations between parenting style and negative attention-seeking behavior in children. If a child did not feel loved and accepted by parents, he or she would get attention in some other way. The more a father used methods of control or discipline which induced guilt, fear, or shame, the more likely it was that boys would act out in negative ways to get their fathers' attention. A likely explanation is that boys do not have the need or desire to strike out angrily when they are not controlled by excessive guilt, shame, or fear.

For girls, acceptance by fathers was significantly correlated with daughters' admiration of and attraction to their fathers, resulting in a strong identification with the father and his characteristics. Such a daughter did not need to act out in order to get attention. If a girl experienced fear of and disapproval from her father, she was more likely to be passive and afraid to make decisions on her own. These dynamics are most powerful in natural father-daughter relationships, but they are also applicable to substitute fathers such as dorm parents.

In a study conducted by Dr. William Britt in 1983, there was a significant correlation between the success of missionaries working

overseas and relationships with fathers in early life (Britt, William, "Pre-training Variables in the Prediction of Missionary Success Overseas," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1983, Vol 11, No. 3, 20–212). Those missionaries who had experienced "father absence," defined as physical absence for any five-year period prior to the fifteenth birthday of the subject, were more likely to fail as missionaries. Fathers have historically been responsible for modeling more instrumental (as opposed to emotional) behaviors and for providing the child with contact with the outside world. An absence of this apparently makes it more difficult for new missionaries to meet the demands of a new culture. No such correlations were found between mother absence and missionary success.

**Who Was Most Important?**

A large study of adult missionary kids was recently completed by MK-CART/CORE, the Missionary Kid Consultation and Research Team/Committee on Research and Endowment. (See Chapter 51 on MK research.) Extensive questionnaires were sent to 1200 adult MKs, and slightly more than half were returned. Telephone interviews were conducted with a random sample of 50 MKs chosen from those who had returned questionnaires. One of the questions was, "Who was most important in your life as you were growing up?" Of the 50 adult MKs interviewed, 16 said it was their father, 14 said both parents, and only 3 said their mother was the most important person. Other responses were houseparents (5), teachers (4), siblings (3), friends (3), and others (2).

What was it about the fathers that made them significant? What character traits and behaviors exhibited by fathers endeared them or at least made them stand out to their children? The responses to these questions can be grouped in categories formulated by Gary Chapman in his book, *The Five Love Languages* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing Co., 1995). They are as follows:

1. Words of affirmation and encouragement
2. Acts of service
3. Quality time spent together
4. Giving and receiving of gifts

## 5. Physical touch.

The following are comments by MKs which were written on the questionnaires or obtained from interviews:

“I respected my father very much. He had a great knowledge of the Bible and lived it in his life... He always turned the other cheek... He was tough as nails in his basic beliefs. I do wish, however, that he had been stronger at home in standing up to my mother.”

“My dad lived what he believed and was a very warm and compassionate person.”

“My best relationship was to my father; my mother too. My father always expressed confidence in me and took time with me. My father was more of an encourager and listener. He prayed a lot for us.”

“My father had a lot of influence because I felt I could never get his attention except for discipline and school grades. What I wanted from him was to listen to me, to spend time with me, even when it wasn't a result of something I'd done. If my schoolwork was great he'd sit down and talk with me about it.... I'd go over to the school and work with him just to be close to him. That's what I wanted most, his time and approval.”

“My father was one person I could put my complete trust in. He nurtured me by his involvement, activities, and being approachable.”

“I received weekly letters, most often from my father, especially when I asked questions. He would write many pages during boarding school. Any questions received voluminous responses; for example, regarding doctrinal issues, he presented all sides of the issue, urging thought, prayer, and a personal decision which he would support. He made it clear where he stood, but gave freedom for my own decision.”

“Dad and I had a very special tie between us. He and I were buddies. We could also have horrible arguments. When we did disagree horribly it got back to being father/daughter. I was as strong willed as he was or maybe more pigheaded than he.”

“My father listened to us a lot. When I came back from boarding school and related negative experiences, he was very good in presenting another perspective. I felt like he listened to us but he helped me to see other sides of many issues.”

“I can remember sitting on my father's lap for family devotions as a child. It's funny, but I can still remember smelling coffee on his breath as he read the Scriptures in the morning.... My father was a man of prayer. He was usually a very early riser and he would pray for us in the morning. It's amazing. It seemed like the station where he lived was always a quiet, serene place, probably because of his intercession and prayer.”

“My father [was most important], because all of us in our family knew we were priority to him, even more than his ministry. I was very assured of his love, even at boarding school. We had lots of letters from him. I remember a time when he had scheduled time with me, and another missionary wanted time with him. My father refused in order to honor the time with me. He was not a perfect father, but he had a priority for us.”

Throughout these and many other accounts, it is apparent that there were struggles, difficulties, times of intimacy and closeness, expressions of warmth and love, and times of argument and sharp words. In addition, the qualities of integrity and spiritual awareness, biblical knowledge, prayer, and teaching by word and example, all played an important part in the influence fathers had on their children. However, it was clear that perfection was not expected nor found.

In all of these qualities of character and expressions of nurture and care for children, there is a basic theme of balance. For fathers to have great significance in the lives of their children, they did not need to be perfect—not even excellent or good.

### “Good Enough” Fathers

In the words of Henry Abramovitch as quoted in Michael Lamb's *Role of the Father in Child Development* (John Wiley & Sons, 1997), a father of influence needs to demonstrate qualities which might be described as “good enough” or as “maintaining the golden mean.” A good enough father needs to be “close but not too close,” able to be intimate with children without being too intrusive. He needs to be “strong but not overwhelming,” capable of standing up for what is right and what fits his belief system while not demanding that the children

follow blindly or out of fear. A good enough father is “loving but not seductive,” able to be close but not exhibiting a sexual interest or involvement with the child.

The ability to be “supportive but able to discipline” is a challenge for many fathers. It means standing up for children and encouraging them, while at times being the strong disciplinarian who gives direction and administers consequences when necessary. Finally, the good enough father is caring but encourages autonomy. As one MK stated, “He made it clear where he stood, but gave freedom for my own decision.”

Abramovitch also points out that it is difficult for fathers to know how to combine the contrasting images of authority and intimacy into a coherent whole.

### ***God as a Model for Fathers***

God is pictured throughout the Scripture in various metaphors bearing the stamp of a father figure, and presenting a model which we can emulate in developing our own parenting styles. One formulation is called ***The Five P’s of Parenting***. In the Lord’s Prayer and throughout the rest of Scripture, God is presented as a model of the ideal father, not just a “good enough father.” The five P’s, listed below, need to be kept in balance. They were reflected in the MK comments mentioned above as to what made the father such a significant figure.

#### ***1. Presence***

The parent is available for the child. In the AMK (adult MK) study, the father was there for them, not just physically, but also emotionally. When he was not physically available, such as when the MK was at boarding school, he made his presence felt in letters and through other communications. God, as the ideal father, promises in both the Old and New Testaments that he will never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6 and Hebrews 13:5). In John 14 and other passages the Holy Spirit is described as always available to us.

#### ***2. Provision***

Parents care for and provide what the child needs, not just for physical needs. God is described as one who will provide for financial needs (Hebrews 13:4, 5), for physical needs (Philippians 4:19), and for

spiritual needs (II Peter 1:3). The Psalms emphasize that God is available to provide for our relational and emotional needs.

#### ***3. Potency***

Parents (fathers) show that they have authority and power by making rules and enforcing them. They demonstrate that they are in charge and are worthy of respect. In Deuteronomy 31:6, in Psalm 91, and in other passages, God is presented as a model of being in charge, and that we can trust in God because he is loving and will give us what is best. We are reminded of this in the often-quoted Romans 8:28, which says that God “works all things together . . . .”

#### ***4. Permission***

Parents give children permission to express feelings openly and clearly in age-appropriate ways, and to try new things and take risks. Encouraging a child to climb a tree, to cross the street alone, to drive a car, and to express feelings are all examples of behaviors which need to be guided as to their appropriateness in regard to age and content or style of expression. Throughout Scripture we are encouraged, both by modeling (John 11:35 and Psalm 103) and by direct command (Ephesians 4:15, 25) to express ourselves truthfully. At the same time, God’s potency is promised when laws are violated.

#### ***5. Protection***

The parent provides a shield of protection, either by physical presence or by giving advice, by toughness in applying consequences, or by denying permission when a child is about to engage in an activity which will be dangerous or potentially harmful. As the ideal father, God also models this quality of protection. From the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy to the protection described in Psalm 91, God’s intervention is evident in the lives of his children. In the New Testament, the Father’s protection through the Spirit’s presence, guidance, prohibitions, and consequences is also evident.

### ***The Father as Part of the Family System***

At this point, it might appear that the father, by himself, is the most significant figure in the life of the developing child. However, the father

never acts alone, but is part of a much larger interacting system. Not only does the father influence the child, but the relationships in the family—between father and mother, between parents and children, between siblings, and between the personal characteristics of each member of the family in a reciprocal way with every other member—also influence the child. There is an interplay of numerous factors. For example, while fathers have an effect on parent-child relationships, it is also true that the characteristics of each child affect their fathers (as well as mothers) and how the parents as individuals and as a team respond to the child. Characteristics of the father impact the way the parents get along with each other, and that marital relationship also affects the development of the child.

### **Summary**

Fathers are very important in the lives of MKs, though the specific ways in which fathers affect their children vary greatly. Some result in disastrous situations; others produce great blessing and have positive impact for everyone in the family. Most are characterized by a mixture of good and bad, joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure. In other words, both positive and negative outcomes occur in all family situations. In this chapter, we have described the role of the father in the lives of missionary children and have shown how God as father can be a model for human fathers. At the same time, we recognize that human fathers will never attain the ideal of the perfect father.

As missionary fathers are aware of the significant impact their interactions have on their children—emotionally, cognitively, physically, socially, and spiritually—they may better understand the importance of learning from and shaping their parental styles according to the model of the Father of All, our heavenly Father. May that be the focus of each missionary dad.

Adapted from a presentation at the 1997 “Mental Health and Missions” conference.

## **23.** ***Preschool Curriculum: Structure and Wonder***

**Diane Lilleberg**

Sometimes it is a phone call. What curriculum do you have for preschool? Sometimes it is a letter. Please send us your preschool curriculum. I consider these requests from two perspectives.

As a parent, I admire the request for preschool curriculum. I remember preschool! I remember vividly enough to wonder how anyone with preschoolers can be asking for anything more to do. As a teacher, I appreciate the request for preschool curriculum. I know it comes from a sincere desire to prepare children adequately to do well in school and to meet upcoming life experiences.

### ***Philosophy of Curriculum***

But what is “curriculum”? In my graduate work in curriculum, defining it was the first order of business. And everyone defines it differently. For the preschool curriculum outlined in this article, curriculum is defined as “making the most of every opportunity.”

The “teaching” role of parenting preschool children isn’t just about formal structure and right and wrong ways of doing things. The world is full of wonder for your little ones, and rightfully so. We should consider their wonder before we impose our structure.

Curriculum is too often thought of in terms of skills, but it is so much more. Skills such as reading and computation are important to bring order and meaning to the world. Skills give us the ability to effectively share that order and meaning with one another. My philosophy of education includes the belief that the order and meaning should point children to God through:

- encouraging awe in considering creation (science)
- respect for self and others that includes consideration of both our similarities and our uniqueness (social studies)

- opportunities to respond to our Creator through our created talents and the experiences God allows in our lives (the arts and service).

As you consider the last one, remember that even the youngest child gives to us by refreshing our “wonder-view” of the world. Children benefit from knowing that they are special and can give back to us. They deserve to understand that and to hear our gratitude expressed.

### ***Philosophy in Practice***

The above is background, the philosophy of curriculum. When you are busy, never quite able to get ahead, and find school to be approaching at an alarming pace, philosophy can and will feel empty without practical application.

This “curriculum outline” includes ideas adapted from a parent workshop I used to do on preparing children for formal kindergarten in the U.S. I have tried for a balanced approach from both a parent’s perspective (wanting to prepare a child) and a teacher’s perspective (noticing what is really effective preparation). I have also tried to consider the range of settings in which you readers find yourselves. I hope the following will both inspire (I can do that!) and reassure you (I am doing a lot of things right without formal, structured help!). I also hope that the encouragement toward structure is balanced with the encouragement of wonder.

**1. Expand vocabulary while your children are underfoot.** Talk about everything you do. Think about the limitless possibilities as your toddler “helps” you make the bed. Together you can experience sheet, blanket, pillow, tuck, fold, pull, wrinkle, smooth, top, bottom, head, foot, side . . . and on and on. I love the expression, “bathe them in language.”

**2. Learn to ask your preschool children questions that demand more than one-word answers.** Don’t fall into the “Did you have fun?” habit. Instead ask, “What did you do outside?” Or, “Tell me about something you saw today that you never noticed before.” Then listen. Perhaps you can prove you are listening by restating in a slightly different manner what your children say. For instance, if they mention seeing something “different,” you can respond that it was indeed “unusual.” Or if they tell you the flower is “pretty,” you can agree that it is “beautiful.”

**3. Make every trip a field trip.** When you go on errands, talk to your children about what you are doing and what happens in the places you go. Compare what happens in your current location, other locations your children remember, and those they might not remember but need to know.

As you stamp a letter, talk about why you need a stamp, where you get a stamp, what happens to the money you pay for it, where you want the letter to go, and how it might get there. If you aren’t sure about all of it, say so. It is wonderful for children to discover that adults need to learn, and don’t have all the answers.

You can even compare ways you might have to line up or queue at a post office. One of my most memorable “parenting preschooler” moments came when my son at age two first saw a post office line in the U.S. He demanded (with volume) to know why the grown-ups wanted to play choo-choo train. His question instilled wonder that balanced the structure being imposed on some twenty people during the pre-Christmas mailing rush!

**4. Fill empty “waiting minutes.”** Use times when your hands are busy (those high “potential-to-whine” times) by encouraging recall of general knowledge. Help your child learn body parts, colors, those most-important position words (left, right, over, under), counting, their full name, their birth date, some way of naming places they live, and so on. A game sometimes helps. Ask them to bring you a red car. Then have them put it under a chair, on a chair, or “zoom” it around the chair.

**5. Learn to show rather than tell initial learning experiences.** After all the emphasis on talking, I now encourage you not to talk so much. After you have told your child to look “under” something for the fifth time and he still hasn’t found it, take the time to show him *under*. Then see how many other *unders* he can find. And while you are at it, review *over* and save a lot of voice! Anything you seem to nag about should trigger the question, “Have I ever shown them?” Have you demonstrated how to shut a door without slamming it? How to put the books on the shelf? For example, my family was discovering that my children needed a demonstration on how to pet a dog! An earlier two-minute demo would have eliminated many “Don’t bug the dog”

commands and frustration for all . . . especially the dog! What seems obvious to us may not be at all obvious to a child.

**6. Teach your child to listen.** Listening implies more than just hearing. It involves actively and consciously attending for the purpose of gaining meaning. Insist on attention and culturally appropriate body language (i.e., eye and head position) when you are giving directions.

Do not get in the habit of repeating directions. This encourages lazy listening. Ask first, “What did I just say that you remember?” And be a good listening model. Provide opportunities for modeling through a family activity, perhaps around the table at the evening meal. Ask what the best part of the day was for each person. Then ask one child what someone else said. Be sure you know as well!

**7. As children mature, increase the directions you give for chores, first to two-steps, then to three.** They don’t all have to be related to the chore, especially at first. You might say, “Empty the water out of this pail. Put it back under the window when you are done. Make a funny face in the window before you come back.” Children who do not have a strong inclination towards talking may benefit from repeating the directions before they start. On the other hand, you might ask a child who continually talks to try to remember to do everything without repeating it aloud. In either case, when they return ask them what they did.

**8. Recognize the value of play.** It is indeed a child’s “work.” Children learn who they are, vent their feelings, and experiment with relationships and ideas through play. Encourage creativity in play. Creativity is valued in schooling, but the very nature of school demands conformity soon enough. Share what you remember from your play at their age. Give them room and suggestions to help them develop their imagination while they have time and such a natural and comfortable ability to wonder.

**9. Establish appropriate literacy orientation (i.e., top to bottom, left to right) and a sense of words during cuddly, comfortable story time.** I am assuming that you read regularly to your children. If you do not, developing a regular habit of sharing a reading experience is a necessary first step. As you read, trace your finger under the words (smoothly rather than word by word) to help your children develop

directional orientation. It will also help them realize that you are getting meaning from the printed words.

When you turn the page, have your child tell you which page you should read next, the left or the right. Remember the obvious is not always obvious. In a similar vein, when your child is first attempting to write, do not be overly concerned about letter reversals. As you know, orientation in print is learned and becomes habit with use. Even older children with a strong literacy orientation will reverse when they are tired.

**10. Encourage counting, classifying, and ordering throughout your daily activities.** Children need to work with actual objects before being required to use numerals to represent number. Setting the table, pairing socks, sorting colors, and many games all give natural opportunities to prepare them for the world of numbers.

**11. Give children lots of hands-on experience with school tools.** Children are almost always familiar with crayons, pencils, and paper, but benefit from more experience with scissors, glue, and paint. They need to experiment with how much glue is enough and how much is too much. They can learn brush painting with water on almost any hard surface (Look, Dad, it disappears into thin air!) or finger painting with shaving cream on the table (Look Mom, my hands are cleaner than when I started!)

Adults are often frustrated cutting with the scissors typically provided for children. Invest in a pair of excellent quality children’s scissors that will work for either left or right hands. Cutting a piece of your hair is a good quality test, but since children are natural mimes I don’t recommend trying this in front of them! Don’t require frustrating tasks with any of these tools. Just make them familiar friends.

**12. Introduce your children to independent work habits.** Ask them to follow a direction for an activity, and encourage them to wait for approval until the task is completed. Be careful what you require during this time. It should be age-appropriate and, as a parent, your concern should be with effort and attitude rather than perfection.

**13. Provide safety to risk learning something new.** Teach your child that mistakes are acceptable and are a way to learn. Try to believe it

yourself and honestly share your mistakes and what you have learned from them. Your safety to risk, along with your own vulnerability in not being perfect, may have an invaluable carry-over into school if you plan to teach your children yourself. Growth involves honest and purposeful effort to learn and to continue learning. The natural tendency to reward perfect products diminishes the kind of safe environment that supports growth.

**14. Prepare your children to stand for values and behaviors your family considers important.** Every family has its own culture and value system, and it is too easy to communicate that different means bad. As your children grow and have opportunities for experiences outside your family system, they are apt to bump into some conflicts. How you model a response to those differences and how you help your children deal with such conflicts deserves careful thought.

**15. Consider your own journey, and talk about it with your children.** Take time to “Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds . . .” Then start early “talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6). It won’t get easier with “a better ability to understand.” It is easier to form habits before there are other opposing habits that restrict you.

**16. Celebrate!** Celebrate much more than learning skills or reaching developmental milestones. Celebrate learning and wonder. Celebrate how your children endear themselves to you, how they contribute to your ministry, the fresh perspective they give on what is important in the world, and their examples of faith.

Celebration doesn’t require anything fancy. Ask your little ones to help with ideas. And record your celebrations. Don’t let them lapse with the baby book. I am so grateful that I wrote notes on the calendar, had reason and opportunity to expand those notes as I wrote letters to extended family, and that those letters were saved and are now available. Both the celebrations and the record help children identify and celebrate who they are when that becomes important to them.

If you choose to follow this preschool curriculum, remember we are told to look to a child as an example of faith. Let your young children be full of wonder. Learn from them as well as teaching them about your own

wonder and structure. Remember that relationship involves both giving and receiving. Make the most of every opportunity. Give to your children who *you* are becoming and receive with celebration who they are becoming. Don’t let anyone’s curriculum (including this one) impose a structure that limits the wonder of the possibilities open to you as you build your relationship with your preschool children and prepare them for more “formal” schooling.

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## 24.

### *Development: The Twig Is Bent*

Wayne D. Lance

'Tis education forms the common mind;  
 Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclin'd.  
 Boastful and rough, your first son is a Squire;  
 The next a Tradesman, meek, and much a liar;  
 Tom struts a Soldier, open, bold, and brave;  
 Will sneaks a Scriv'ner, an exceeding knave.  
 Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays*, Epistle I

#### *Introduction*

It seems to be the rule rather than the exception that if you have more than one child you will sooner or later find that each child learns and behaves in different ways. Just when parents think they have found the ideal approach for teaching a subject area or shaping behavior, along comes the second or third child and the previously successful method falls short of expectations.

As Pope suggests in his satirical poem, even a lifetime of experience is insufficient to form accurate generalizations about the nature of humankind, except this one: that we are all different. This insight into human behavior is nothing new; yet we often respond to children as if we expect them all to be the same.

#### **Individual Differences**

##### *A Panorama of Differences*

Most descriptions of individual differences stake out a position at the beginning and move on from there. If I come at it from the viewpoint of cognitive psychology, I can review the theories and research about intelligence, looking at the “g factor” (general factor of mental ability), along with the newer theories of multiple intelligences, and then try to determine how best to intervene based on these theories and findings.

Or, I can look at styles of learning and understanding, paying little attention to intelligence or IQ per se. This learning-style perspective has

led educators to adopt methodologies along a broad continuum. They range from almost totally individualized learning experiences tailored to various learning styles, to integrated approaches that attempt to provide “brain-based learning” with the learning group as the vehicle for linking information and understanding.

##### *Temperament, Type, Style, and Intelligence*

One has only to study the lives of Old and New Testament characters to realize that people have differed in temperament and abilities from the beginning of time. Add to this the lessons from the Epistles about differing spiritual gifts, and we can only conclude God never intended that we all react and learn in the same way. One of the joys of parenthood is discovering the uniqueness of each child.

Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas, professors of psychiatry at New York Medical Center, are well known and respected for their research and writings in child development. Relying on numerous studies, they have documented how babies are different from birth in nine categories, including factors such as activity level, rhythmicity, approach or withdrawal, adaptability, sensory threshold, quality of mood, intensity of reactions, distractibility, and persistence and attention span. They also found decided differences in temperament at an early age.

The differences detectable in infancy continue into childhood, adolescence, and the adult years. There is consistency over time, although other psychological attributes such as intellectual competence, adaptive mechanisms, social and cultural patterns, and imposed or learned value systems have their influence.

It is not only the uniqueness of each child that should interest us, but also our styles as parents. Early on in the parenting experience we observe how Mom's style of parenting differs from Dad's, and the consequences are seen in the way a child responds differently to each parent. Our expectations for our children are shaped by our own unique selves. Learning to be a good parent requires an understanding of our own temperament, style, and cognitive profile. The parent who also serves as the child's teacher adds another dimension to the grid through which children can be understood.

The topic is complex and controversial, but it is important to learn as much as possible about our children and their God-given individuality.

## Multiple Intelligences

As the number of family members increases, parents never cease to be amazed at the diversity of temperaments, personality types, talents, and abilities that emerge. Here we will focus on the cognitive aspects of variance, using the relatively new theory of multiple intelligences.

### *The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*

Many of us agree that the older stereotypical concept of intelligence is too constricted. We tend to reject the notion that “intelligence” can be objectively measured and summed up in a single score called “IQ.” Our personal life experiences suggest that such things as common sense, intuition, creativity, and social awareness are all a part of higher-order functioning, or intelligence. We recognize that the mental power to manipulate symbols is only one aspect of intelligence.

The theory of multiple intelligences, developed by Howard Gardner, offers a broader framework than the traditional model of intelligence. This theory is one way to view our children for the purpose of adapting methods of instruction to their individual needs at the cognitive level.

Howard Gardner challenges the notion of a single intelligence that can be assessed by a paper-and-pencil test. Going back ten or eleven years, Professor Gardner developed his theory of multiple intelligences. Since that time, many educators have used this theory as a basis for constructing new strategies for approaching curriculum.

The problem lies less in the technology of testing than in the ways we customarily think about the intellect and in our ingrained view of intelligence. Only if we expand and formulate our view of what counts as human intellect will we be able to devise more appropriate ways of assessing it and more effective ways of educating it.

One reason children behave and learn in so many different ways is that they have different combinations of intelligences, different capacities for solving problems and fashioning products. The prevailing notion of a

single intelligence often closes the door to making a breakthrough when a child apparently has low aptitude for learning a subject as measured by traditional means. But when that same child is viewed as having different combinations of intelligences, the closed door may begin to open.

### *Seven Intelligences*

Gardner groups capabilities (some people might call them aptitudes or talents) into seven categories. It helpful to think of them functionally—how these intelligences actually work in people’s lives, not as isolated capabilities, but working in concert.

**Linguistic:** Using words effectively, orally (storyteller, orator, politician) or in writing (poet, playwright, editor, journalist); manipulating the syntax, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics of language.

**Logical-Mathematical:** Using numbers effectively (mathematician, tax accountant, statistician) and reasoning well (scientist, computer programmer, logician); showing sensitivity to logical patterns, relationships, and other related abstractions; demonstrating aptness in using processes of categorization, classification, inference, generalization, calculation, and hypothesis testing.

**Spatial:** Perceiving the visual-spatial world accurately (hunter, scout, guide) and performing transformations upon those perceptions (interior decorator, architect, artist, inventor); being sensitive to color, line, shape, form, space, and the relationships that exist between these elements; exhibiting the ability to visualize, to represent visual or spatial ideas graphically, and to orient oneself appropriately in a spatial matrix.

**Bodily-Kinesthetic:** Displaying expertise in using one’s whole body to express ideas and feelings (actor, mime, athlete, dancer) and in using one’s hands to produce or transform things (craftsperson, sculptor, mechanic, surgeon); possessing specific physical skills such as coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, flexibility, and speed, as well as proprioceptivity (sensitive to own movements), and tactile capacities.

**Musical:** Perceiving (music aficionado), discriminating (music critic), transforming (composer), and expressing (performer) musical forms; displaying sensitivity to the rhythm, pitch, and timbre of a musical

piece; having a figural or “top-down” understanding of music (global, intuitive), a formal or “bottom-up” understanding (analytic, technical), or both.

**Interpersonal:** Perceiving and making distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people; showing sensitivity to facial expression, voice, and gesture; discriminating among many different kinds of interpersonal cues; responding effectively to those cues in some pragmatic way (influencing a group of people to follow a certain line of action).

**Intrapersonal:** Showing evidence of self-knowledge and acting adaptively on the basis of that knowledge; having an accurate picture of oneself (strengths and limitations); exhibiting an awareness of inner moods, intentions, motivations, temperaments, and desires; and possessing the capacity for self-discipline, self-understanding, and self-esteem.

**Relationships Among Intelligences:** I find it helpful in understanding the relationships among these seven intelligences to view them in three general categories: (1) temporal (time and sequence); (2) spatial (space and place); and (3) personal elements of the problems we face (personal and social awareness).

Linguistic, musical, and logical-mathematical intelligences involve the ability to process and communicate temporal and sequential information. Spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences focus on the ability to understand the nature of space and our place in it. Intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences focus on our sense of self and how we relate to others.

People are often surprised to find personal elements (intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences) included as intelligences, but those capabilities are as important for success in life as the first two categories. Yet we often limit our assessment of intelligence to the first category—the linguistic and logical-mathematical.

### **Identifying Multiple Intelligences**

One reason the traditional model of defining and measuring intelligence has held such prominence in education over the years is the relative ease with which a test can be administered and scored. There

seems to be some comfort in following a pattern for administering tests, and a set of rules for scoring and obtaining the final result. It all seems so “scientific” and “objective.” Don’t expect to find precise and standardized paper-and-pencil tests for assessing multiple intelligences.

This lack of precision in developing a profile of a child’s multiple intelligences is one reason some people find it difficult to carry out research and document validity with Gardner’s theory. The lack of standardized measuring instruments is not viewed as a problem, however, by most educators applying the theory. In actual practice, simple observation is the best tool for assessing children’s multiple intelligences. Gardner believes children begin to show proclivities or inclinations in specific intelligences at an early age, and for this reason I believe parents are especially suited to make valid observations.

If a parent or teacher feels more structure is required in developing a multiple-intelligences profile, Thomas Armstrong has developed a checklist or inventory (not a test) based on the seven kinds of learning styles that grew out of the theory of multiple intelligences. Knowing that most students have strengths in several areas, the inventory is used to obtain an informal but helpful profile showing the child’s individual proclivities.

As a parent, you have access to a wealth of information to gain an understanding of your children’s learning styles. Think about hobbies and special interests, how they spend their free time, and how they read their stories. Look at their pictures and sketches. Review their scrapbooks, videotapes, audiocassettes, and photographs for further clues.

Armstrong has an interesting approach for identifying students’ intelligences:

I’ve often humorously suggested to teachers that one good way to identify students’ most highly developed intelligences is to observe how they misbehave in class. The strongly linguistic student will be talking out of turn, the highly spatial student will be doodling and daydreaming, the interpersonally inclined student will be socializing, the bodily-kinesthetic student will be fidgeting, and so forth. These students are metaphorically

saying through their misbehaviors: “This is how I learn, teacher, and if you don’t teach me through my most natural learning channels, guess what? I’m going to do it anyway.” These intelligence-specific misbehaviors, then, are diagnostic indicators of how students need to be taught. (*Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, p.28)

### ***Key Points in MI Theory***

In developing his theory, Gardner established criteria (or certain basic “tests”) that each intelligence had to meet in order to be included. The factors he considered included: research with individuals suffering from damage to known areas of the brain; the existence of savants, prodigies, and other exceptional individuals; developmental histories of exceptional individuals; support from psychometric and experimental findings; identification of a set of operations indigenous to the intelligence under question; and susceptibility of the intelligence to being encoded in a symbol system.

In understanding Gardner’s theory, it is important to keep in mind these key points:

- Each person possesses all seven intelligences
- Most people can develop each intelligence to an adequate level of competency
- Intelligences usually work together in complex ways
- There are many ways to be intelligent within each category.

### ***Applying the Theory of Multiple Intelligences***

When used as an infrastructure, the theory of multiple intelligences can guide parents in developing a framework for helping children engage more fully and effectively in learning.

In much the same way classroom teachers find it easy to fall into a pattern of teaching primarily by talking (giving instructions and lecturing), parent-teachers find it easy to overuse the technique of having children respond to written directives in workbooks and worksheets. While these linguistic and logical techniques are sometimes appropriate,

they may not always be the best method for taking full advantage of children’s natural bent for learning—nor do they always lead to maximal development of children’s spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences.

Parents may find the following suggestions useful in applying the theory of multiple intelligences to home-teaching situations. Not only will a variation in methods enhance learning opportunities for your children, but you will also find your own enthusiasm for teaching increasing as your creative juices begin to flow.

***Shift the method of presentation.*** Analyze the way you present material to your children. If you find you are overemphasizing one or two areas to the exclusion of others, branch out. Most of us are apt to make use of linguistic-centered presentations (books and tapes for example) and probably logical-mathematical materials (calculators, manipulatives), but we less often use other forms of presenting material.

Other methods of presentation might include: spatial (mind-mapping, art activities, graphs, maps, LEGO sets, cameras); bodily-kinesthetic (drama, dance, tactile activities, building tools, clay); musical (songs that teach, musical instruments); interpersonal (cooperative learning, peer tutoring, simulations, board games, role playing); or intrapersonal (journals, independent study, options in a course of study, self-esteem building).

***Adapt lesson plans, units, and themes to address each child’s strongest intelligences.*** Ask: How can I translate the material to be taught from one intelligence to another? If you have a child with a decided strength in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, for example, look at the material to be learned in terms of how you can involve the whole body in learning and how you might use hands-on experiences.

You may be using the same theme or unit with all your children, but you can adapt to meet individual differences in intelligences. Is there a way to build on the strengths your child has in the area of interpersonal intelligence by building in more cooperative and peer-sharing activities? Think about the child with a highly developed spatial intelligence—are any activities specifically appropriate for him or her?

**Use teaching strategies befitting various intelligences.** Armstrong lists and discusses 35 teaching strategies, five for each of the seven intelligences. Space does not allow listing them all here, so one example for each is provided. You can probably think of a number of other ways to develop each one, remembering you do not want to teach only to each child's strengths, but also to give practice using his or her less developed areas.

**A Linguistic Strategy:** Storytelling. Weave important concepts and ideas into a story you tell directly to your child. If you are teaching percentages, make up a story about a family where each member eats 10% more food than the next younger member of the family. Once your children get the idea that storytelling can be used with any area of the curriculum, they will begin to create their own stories.

**A Logical-Mathematical Strategy:** Classification and categorization. In a unit on communication, list various means of communicating feelings, then classify them according to mode of communication (linguistic, kinesthetic, artistic, etc.).

**A Spatial Strategy:** Graphic Symbols. Create a time line for a particular unit being studied and have children create symbols to represent various events (wars, births, deaths).

**A Bodily-Kinesthetic Strategy:** Body Maps. Use the body as a reference point or map for specific knowledge. For example, in learning about the locations of countries in Africa, the head can represent North Africa, the feet, South Africa, with individual countries located accordingly.

**A Musical Strategy:** Rhythms, Songs, and Chants. Put the main points of what you are teaching into a rhythmic format. This can be done to learn spelling words, the multiplication tables or Bible verses.

**An Interpersonal Strategy:** Simulations. Have a group create an "as-if" environment. If you are preparing to return to your home country, have them begin acting as if they were meeting cousins in a big city for the first time.

**An Intrapersonal Strategy:** Feeling-toned Moments. Begin by modeling emotions as you teach and then encourage your children to do so. In studying about President Lincoln, read the Gettysburg Address

with feeling. After discussing the emotions evoked by this speech, have each child read a portion of it with the feeling Lincoln must have conveyed.

**Maximize the learning environment.** Your classroom may be the dining room table, a corner of a bedroom, or a space under the shade of a tree—not exactly the typical classroom! Nevertheless, you can give some thought to how you can arrange this environment to accommodate the needs of children who learn in different ways.

To begin with, you might look at time. How is your time structured? Do children have opportunity to work on long-term projects without always being interrupted to go on with the next subject? Is the sequence of activities and the time of day compatible with each child's bent for maximum involvement? Is there some consistency, as opposed to a sense of chaos?

How about spatial arrangements? Are all activities to be carried out at a desk or table? Have your children learned to study and do projects in a variety of settings, especially settings suited to both the activity and the child's style of learning? Are tactile, manipulative, and other hands-on materials accessible for easy use?

Does the auditory environment promote learning? Is there a way to reduce disturbing background noises? Does your voice vary in intensity, inflection, and emphasis, or do you tend to use a monotone quality?

If you have two or more children, are they working in isolation, or are they learning to work together on some lessons, even if there is quite an age difference? Do they know how you expect them to resolve conflicts? Are the children exposed to experiences designed to promote self-concept? Are they given opportunity and encouraged to share feelings? Are they given appropriate choices?

Most of what we have been discussing about multiple intelligences is based on a theoretical framework without a great deal of hard research data to support the theory. However, the educational literature is replete with anecdotal reports and articles indicating that numerous schools are finding the theory to be of practical value.

## Learning Styles

Having discussed individual differences from a cognitive frame of reference, I turn now to styles of learning. Whereas the theory of multiple intelligences focuses on capabilities or aptitudes, a learning styles approach is more centered on how a learner interprets his or her world.

These views of how we learn are not competing theories or concepts, but complementary ones. At the risk of oversimplifying, I suggest that studying our children through a grid of multiple intelligences helps us map their broad range of abilities and understand how they process information; studying them through a grid of learning styles helps us characterize the way they learn and what tends to motivate them.

There are numerous ways to approach and describe learning styles. Some models approach them through personality types (such as assessed by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator). Other models look more at environmental preferences, while still others focus more on modalities and learning strategies. A few models are really a blend of all of the above.

Of particular interest to Christian parents are models of learning styles based on or derived from biblical principles. Rebecca Metzger utilizes a three-dimensional model based on I John 1:2, seeing or perceiving information, bearing witness or internalizing information, and proclaiming or retrieving the material in appropriate circumstances. In utilizing this model, Metzger provides inventories to assess learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and mixed), processing styles (intuitive, analytical, and mixed), and personality styles (ruler, promoter, designer, and server). The assessment phase is followed by the selection of curricula and teaching methods consistent with the various styles.

Ray Moody relates four styles of learning to virtues: innovative to love, analytic to wisdom, common sense to justice, and dynamic to courage. He also shows the links between styles and spiritual gifts. For each style he describes how to recognize individuals with this style, how they make decisions, what they tend to like and dislike, how they are motivated, as well as positive and negative considerations for each style.

For a description of specific styles, one author is helpful in integrating several models so that they translate into guidelines for teaching to individual differences.

### A Blend of Theories

Cynthia Ulrich Tobias, founder and president of Learning Styles Unlimited, pulls from several models to assist parents and teachers in recognizing, identifying, and working with various strengths and preferences. To help parents and teachers utilize the concept of learning styles, she presents several fundamental principles, including this very important one: use labels in a positive manner to understand, not to analyze. And remember that styles are value neutral, that is, no style is better than another. It is also important to remember that while each of us probably has a dominant style, we no doubt have characteristics and attributes from each of the styles.

Tobias makes another point we need to remember as we try to understand how our children learn: “I understood early on that to communicate effectively with all my students, the process resembled learning foreign languages. Although I may never master the art of thinking in another style, I can use words that connect with the design of another’s mind.”

The more we are able to see and understand the unique style of each of our children and to better understand our own learning style, the greater the probability of communicating with our children and motivating them to achieve their God-given potential.

### Dominant Styles

Drawing upon the work of Anthony Gregorc, Tobias discusses perception (the way we take in information) and ordering (the way we use the information we perceive). People tend to perceive information both concretely and abstractly, but usually one way of perceiving is more dominant than the other. After taking in information, people tend to order it sequentially or randomly, and again, one is way usually dominant over the other.

Putting these together, Tobias presents four combinations as ways to describe learning styles. She also presents lists of words often used to characterize each style.

### Concrete Sequential

Key Word: *Facts*

hardworking  
accurate  
dependable  
factual  
conventional  
stable  
consistent  
organized

### Abstract Sequential

Key Words: *Underlying Principles*

analytic  
knowledgeable  
structured  
deliberate  
objective  
thorough  
logical  
systematic

### Concrete Random

Key Words: *Compelling Reasons*

quick  
curious  
creative  
instinctive  
intuitive  
realistic  
innovative  
adventurous

### Abstract Random

Key Words: *Personal Relevance*

sensitive  
perceptive  
idealistic  
spontaneous  
compassionate  
imaginative  
sentimental  
flexible

In order to get a better grasp on each of these four styles, Tobias provides information on what individuals in each group tend to do best, what makes the most sense to them, what's hard for them, and finally, what questions they ask when learning.

Layered upon this description of the four styles, Tobias adds other ways of viewing individual differences. These include environmental preferences for concentration (designing the ideal study environment), ways of remembering information (learning strategies), and varying ways we tend to understand material (methods and study skills).

### Concentrating

Drawing upon the research of Kenneth and Rita Dunn, Tobias makes a strong case for attending to the learning environment when attempting to provide an optimal educational program for children. Children (and adults too) demonstrate preferences for where they study and for various characteristics of the learning environment.

It may surprise you that not every person prefers and performs to their maximum in an orderly, quiet, well-lit room, free from all distractions. Some people actually do better without silence and solitude. They seem to need noise to keep from being distracted.

I like lots of bright light when I study, but I recall colleagues who worked best in a room with lights so soft that I could hardly see! When they came into my brightly-lit office, they found it very distracting.

The temperature of the study area can be an important factor, too. I am always amazed at how different members of the same family can vary in their reaction to heat and cold.

Some children occasionally need to eat and drink something in order to keep their minds focused on their lessons. The time of day can also be critical. We are not all "morning people," nor do we all come to life in the evening. When setting up a schedule to teach our children, we may forget that children also have their own internal time clocks.

### Remembering

Differences in the way we use our memory are also important factors to consider, according to researchers Walter Barbe and Raymond Swassing. Tobias explains their findings about sensory perception in terms of modalities: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic.

The auditory learner needs to hear himself say something in order to remember it, while the visual learner needs to see it, and the kinesthetic learner does best when physical activity is involved. For some people, verbal instructions are easy to remember; for others, visual representation is needed. In order for a kinesthetic youngster to remember your instructions, he or she may need to physically walk or move through an activity.

### Understanding

Relying upon the work of Herman Witkin, Tobias uses the terms analytic and global. The analytic learner tends to like things in an orderly step-by-step sequence, while the global person is more apt to see the big picture. Analytic types like details, organization, consistency, and doing one thing at a time. Global types like to be flexible, go with the flow, and be involved in discussion and group efforts.

This dimension of learning is very important because it relates to how children pay attention (or don't), how they follow directions, and how they organize and manage their time. It is equally important for teaching parents to recognize their own approach to understanding. An analytic parent can be driven crazy by a global child (and visa versa!) if no attempt is made to accommodate to these differences.

### A Caveat

People do not fit into neat little boxes. Few, if any, people are totally concrete random, with preferences for concentrating, remembering, and understanding that can be accurately labeled with only one term for each preference. We are complex beings. However, we can benefit by looking at various models of learning styles. Then, through careful observation of ourselves and our children, we can determine dominant styles and preferences and arrange our teaching methods and learning environment accordingly.

### Assessing Learning Styles

While researchers have developed formal checklists and assessment instruments, Tobias believes much can be learned through informal processes of observing, listening, and experimenting. She suggests that parents observe patterns of behavior, listen to the way a child communicates, and experiment with what works and what doesn't work for each particular child.

In her chapters about dominant styles, Tobias provides descriptive information to assist in applying these three processes. It is helpful to have a copy of her book; however, I believe it is possible to gain a fairly accurate portrait of a child's dominant style by seeing how he or she matches up with the list of words used to characterize each style.

When making an informal assessment of a child's dominant style, Tobias suggests focusing more on natural strengths rather than on weaknesses. She believes strengths provide a much better foundation for learning than attempting to improve areas of weakness. To help parents become better observers and listeners, she encourages them to try to learn all they can about learning styles in general and about each child's style in particular.

For parents desiring more formal checklists, you may be interested in a publication by Alta Vista College (see [Resources](#)). Two surveys are included in this publication: one for the younger student and one for adults and older students. Results from the use of either of these surveys will assist in obtaining a profile of temperament or style in the domains of feeling, thinking, sensing, and intuiting.

Whether you use a checklist or simply spend time observing your child, the important thing is to begin to understand the unique qualities that make each of your children different from any other and then to welcome and nurture that diversity. If you are a visually-oriented person, you may want to prepare some sort of diagram or chart to indicate each child's profile of styles and preferences for learning. I encourage you, while doing this, to focus on your own styles and preferences in order to gain insight into how your present teaching methods might enhance or detract from what best "fits" each of your children.

### Teaching to Learning Styles

Returning to the four combinations of perception and ordering as described by Tobias, I will draw from her list of suggestions for teaching (or "getting along with," as she puts it) each of the four dominant combinations of learning styles.

### Concrete Sequential

- Be consistent and organized in your approach.
- Use common sense.
- Remember that CSs have feelings even if they may not display their feelings as often as others.

- Give advance notice of what you intend to do so CSs can prepare themselves.
- Present step-by-step instructions and tell CSs what they should do and what you expect.
- Expect CSs to take responsibility for their actions and to pull their own weight.
- Avoid dealing in generalities.

### ***Abstract Sequential***

- Have specific goals and communicate them clearly.
- Use logic and reasoning.
- Listen to what ASs have to say.
- Give ASs a job and then leave them alone and let them do it.
- Be complete, thorough, and deliberate.
- Keep issues factual.
- Give ASs time to research projects for the best approach.
- Make certain ASs understand the purpose of the project.
- Give time to think and research; don't expect an immediate response.

### ***Abstract Random***

- Give ARs the opportunity to help others.
- Give lots of feedback, both positive and negative.
- Be less serious.
- Avoid nitpicking.
- Remember ARs will get things done, even if not in the way you might expect.
- Avoid putting ARs in the middle of a conflict.
- Allow ARs to be spontaneous
- Show appreciation.
- Avoid the tendency to mistake a happy exterior for lack of ability.
- Remember not all is written in stone.

### ***Concrete Random***

- Tell CRs "what," not "how."
- Point CRs in the right direction and then let them go.

- Be flexible.
- Tell CRs what they did right, not what they did wrong.
- Don't be threatened by enthusiasm.
- Keep CRs involved.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Be open to change.

As you assess the ways in which each of your children is best able to concentrate, think about how you can modify the learning environment (your kitchen, bedroom, or eating area) if this seems desirable.

- Does one child prefer subdued rather than bright light?
- Is a private study area behind a divider better than being seated around a table with other children?
- Is one area of the home warmer or colder than another, and does this make a difference for an individual child?
- Does one of your youngsters do better with ear plugs and another with earphones connected to a tape recorder playing instrumental music?
- Is a soft chair preferable to a straight, hard one?
- What difference does time of day make in the ability to attend?
- How does each child react to a snack before beginning a lesson requiring close attention?

Finally, attend to factors that promote remembering, specifically preferences in the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic areas. These aspects of learning require you to reconsider the mode used in presenting material and the way in which you encourage children to respond. Perhaps you are too heavy on the visual mode of presentation as opposed to an auditory one. Or do you typically expect your child to respond orally when a visual response might be preferable? How many opportunities are provided for manipulating objects or materials and for moving around during the learning process?

Discovering and acting upon the unique attributes God has placed within each of us is a challenge and an opportunity to learn more about ourselves and our children. Rebecca Metzger, writing on this topic expresses it this way: God knew each one of us before he formed us in

the womb of our mother (Jeremiah 1:5). He consecrated a plan for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11). He designed and formed us in our mother's womb for his glory to fulfill his plan in our lives (Psalms 139: 13-14). We are all created as individuals, but in the image of God. Therefore, just as God cannot be placed in a box, neither can we.

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## **25.**

### ***Helping Students Develop: Key Concepts***

#### **John R. Powell**

“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Parents and school personnel who share in the development of missionary children know well the challenge of this proverb! The psalmist (Ps. 127) reminds us that children are a heritage of the Lord, and compares parents to a bow from which children are sent forth as arrows. School staff participating with parents in the MK's education and development have many opportunities to influence the direction in which the arrow flies. All must depend on God, the Archer, for wisdom and guidance.

Many things go into producing desirable growth. The teaching of knowledge, godly principles, and life skills contribute significantly. But the personal qualities of staff also matter significantly. When asked by MK-CART/CORE researchers to name the most desirable qualities for boarding school personnel, individuals closest to the boarding school experience (parents, former students, and school staff), assumed the necessary technical and academic qualities, but put heavy emphasis on personal characteristics. These included the ability to care in respectful ways, integrate faith with subject matter and everyday life, show an understanding of developmental principles, and be positive role models for students.

In a recent missions-related workshop, we were asked to think about a person who significantly influenced our development and share that with someone nearby. The woman next to me, an adult MK who is now a teacher, described one of her teachers. She detailed this teacher's faithfulness, love of God, tender concern for students, and deep sense of respect and care for others. When she mentioned her name I exclaimed, “I know her, too!” for those qualities had been present in our relationship as well. As we celebrated this person's influence, I thought of the many students who continue to benefit from having known her.

The experiences of relationship during school years are of crucial importance. Their influence, positive or negative, can last a lifetime. God has created us for relationships, and we grow and develop through them. We wish to be listened to, understood, cared about, taken seriously. There is no more important time for these yearnings to be met than during childhood and adolescence. The staff member who responds with an understanding of relevant concepts and principles can be very helpful in a student's growth.

### ***Developmental Principles***

Studies in developmental psychology lead to a series of principles for understanding human development.

- ***Development is a continuous process.*** Virtually every experience in the major developmental years can contribute to one's development. Positive and negative experiences are enfolded into this continuous process. The nature and interpretation of these experiences by caring adults help determine learning, personal characteristics, and behavior in the student. The wise staff member is also aware of his or her own continuous development, realizing that development takes place at virtually any stage of maturity.

- ***Development is psycho-bio-social.*** All aspects of humanity make up and work together in development, including spiritual qualities and understandings. While these areas develop at different rates and receive emphasis at different times in development, they are intricately connected and interactive. Close observation and patience is often called for in assisting with them.

- ***Development is orderly.*** Our created nature is such that normal development moves in an orderly, sequential process when sufficient supports and stimuli are present, although it may not always appear so. It involves periods of acceleration in some areas while others are at plateaus or may even temporarily regress. Certain events, experiences, and deprivations can alter this order and result in immaturity or pathology as the person attempts to cope without adequate supports or teaching, thus

learning maladaptive responses. Given the proper input and stimulation, however, development is generally quite a trustworthy process.

- ***Development is cumulative.*** The completion of one developmental task leads to another and must be successfully completed before further development can occur in that area. A child must learn to crawl before walking; know words, letters, and hand-eye motor coordination before writing; and acquire certain psychological and emotional skills before successfully participating in friendship and intimacy. The observant staff member who sees this principle at work will neither push too hard, nor withhold the necessary instruction or encouragement when needed.

- ***Development is integrative.*** The manifold areas of development, while studied and understood separately (e.g., physical development, learning capacity, emotional development, moral development), integrate with one another to create a whole greater than the sum of the parts. It is this absolutely unique combination of successfully integrated areas which makes a person an individual, and which can have delightful (though sometimes frustrating) manifestations at any age.

- ***Development is idiosyncratic.*** Although there is much commonality among people with standardized norms for numerous developmental areas, each person has an idiosyncratic developmental scheme and process. One child may surpass another in physical coordination, while the other quickly acquires cognitive reasoning ability. One may show great ability to do several things at once; another may need to focus on single projects. One may show a keen sensitivity to spiritual things while another actively resists them. In the school years it is especially important to allow for these idiosyncratic development processes, but understand them also in a normative context.

- ***Development is complex.*** Made in God's image (Gen. 1 and 2), we are infinitely complex. In developing from conception to maturity, the complicated knitting and weaving of these intricate parts is sometimes puzzling but always known to God (Ps. 139). Although we can understand some aspects of this process we must also accept those aspects which are a mystery to us while honoring and appreciating the person in whom they are occurring.

• **Development involves critical periods.** As development occurs there are windows of opportunity, or critical periods, in which certain development must occur if it is to contribute optimally to the individual's overall development. If the learning doesn't take place during this period, it is more difficult to make up later and may retard other areas of development dependent upon it. The learning and application of scriptural truths also apply here, as clearly noted in the Apostle Paul's reference to "milk" and "meat" regarding spiritual maturity, and in the Lord's gentle teaching of Thomas as he worked through his doubts.

• **Development can be modified by the environment.** This is among the most important in the school setting. Development is augmented by a facilitative environment and positive relationships, but may be retarded or misdirected by non-facilitative or destructive elements. As Romans 5:1–5 indicates, however, and as we see in the experience of Joseph, adversity can also have long-range benefits. The school, however, should not be a destructive environment, but a place where problems can be redeemed or corrected. Even if development has been negatively affected, modification and correction can occur through relationships, new experiences, teaching, and other means of participation with the student.

### **Relational Concepts: Time, Talk, Trust**

Successful development depends much on relationship. Building relationships requires time. Listening, showing interest, and taking initiative in shared activities and learning events communicates a sense of caring and belonging for the student. Children can be observed changing from a downcast expression to one of brightness just by being noticed, listened to, and having time with a staff member. Consistency in sharing time builds positive anticipation in students and contributes to security and growth.

School personnel may also augment relationships with students by taking time to build relationships with parents. Knowledge of the parents' location, work, and ministry situation, and acquaintance with other family members adds significantly to understanding a child. As applied in the relationship, it assists staff to lead the MK in understanding and feeling included in the ministry of his or her parents. Building parent

relationships also creates easier access for significant discussion if concerns arise. It helps create a better sense of shared responsibility and mutual perspective for the student's growth.

Talk, meaning interactive communication, is also key to relationship building. Most parents and boarding home parents know well the importance of those "talks" occurring on arrival from classes, around the dinner table, and at (or after!) bedtime. Sharing ideas, questions, and lovingly hearing a student's "wonderings" builds important dimensions of personality structure.

Talking with an actively listening adult facilitates an internal process in the child which helps greatly in an understanding of self, others, God, and the world. The tacit and informal learning in these experiences is every bit as important as formal training.

Trust is the foundation of good relationships. The word itself shares its wordstem with truth, underlining the importance of truthfulness in relationship. Truthfulness builds trust. The Pauline phrase "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) adds the important connection of truth and love in building up others. Truth and love are two sides of the same coin, creating a wealth in life to be spent in building and enjoying trusting relationships. The wise staff member knows that the student's heart quickly experiences the equation, "My house parent is trustworthy; I feel loved", and "I feel loved; I can trust." In turn, it builds not only relationship, but also helps develop secure and trustworthy character.

Trust requires both time and talk, and is more slowly built than broken. Betrayals such as unkept promises, breaking of confidences, and responding insensitively are all too common trust breakers. Results from the recent Adult MK study by MK-CART/CORE show that MKs who experience a sense of trust and inclusion in growing up, especially with their parents, also experience a higher sense of spiritual well-being (in specifically measured ways) than those who did not. Those who experience betrayal or wounding such as in abusive situations, particularly from persons close to them in whom trust is to be placed, show significantly lower scores on spiritual well-being.

**Relational Processes: Recognition, Response, Redemption**

Recognition is usually the beginning point for relationships. It means being noticed as “being there” and means even more as particular facets of qualities and behavior are noted and appreciated. Children should be in the process of building a “store” of good memories and experiences—positive recognitions—which, as they accumulate, become a part one’s self-awareness, understanding, and strength. Because the need for recognition is so strong, students who do not receive it positively in sufficient quantities often develop creative but self-defeating ways of receiving it.

Effective recognition is both subtle and obvious. It can be shown in such ways as exchanging pleasant greetings, being invited into an ongoing conversation or activity, or finding something special left for you when returning to an empty room or house. It is shown as the almost unconscious opening of a circle of people to include one as he or she approaches, or in incidentals which are affirming. Helpful recognition can be shown in joining emotionally with a student in the excitement of an experience (“I scored the winning goal in soccer today!”) or an anticipated event (“My parents are coming to see me next weekend.”) or in a hurt or disappointment. These are also examples of the meaning of “ministering grace according to the needs of the moment” (Eph. 4:29, New American Standard version).

Noting specific and unique attributes or needs can speak powerfully to the legitimate need for recognition. One adolescent MK said “I always like the gifts my sister gives me; she knows exactly what I like!” For a child to know another person has seen a particular quality, preference or need, and has acknowledged it, has an edifying effect on development.

Acknowledgment for achievements, contributions, or success is also important recognition. Rituals are very important for noting passages or transitions such as birthdays, leaving for vacation and special individual experiences. The wisely operated boarding home is one which has traditions and rituals and observes them faithfully so students can both anticipate and enjoy recognition through them.

Recognition paves the way for response. How one responds to what is recognized or identified in a student lays the groundwork for responsive interaction. This, in turn, builds solid and deeper

relationships. The fullness of relationship, within the framework of teaching, caring, planning, disciplining, cooperating, initiating, and through staff roles and responsibilities, is lived out in this responsive exchange. The individual manner in which these are carried out in relationship to a student is powerfully influential. It is the impact of these personal characteristics, reflected in a staff members relationship with a student, which can have a lasting effect on development.

Redemption is a critically important aspect of relationships. Meaningful relationships do not escape misunderstanding or conflict. When these occur, there is a loss, however small, of something in the relationship. It is important that conflict be redeemed if the relationship is to continue at its fullest. These occasions, while sometimes painful, may be opportunities for teaching about our ultimate redemption in Christ, since this small human interaction could well have the components of grace, forgiveness and restoration parallel with that magnificent grace, forgiveness and restoration given us through Christ.

When a student has acted wrongly, needs correction or is developing a pattern of unhealthiness and sin, it needs to be acknowledged clearly but sensitively. Galatians tells us that “...you who are spiritual, restore such a one gently, lest you also be tempted (Gal. 6.1 NAS). A simple misunderstanding or unintended hurt may mean just clarifying the situation by discussion and reassuring the student that the relationship is intact. Or it may mean deeper discussion and forgiveness. In such times the staff member needs to be aware of his or her own vulnerability to temptation or wrongdoing as a reminder to be gentle, fair, truthful and forgiving. These are salient opportunities for showing grace and giving a student both experiential and scriptural understanding of God’s forgiveness and redemption in Christ.

Discipline is also a necessary part of helping students experience interpersonal redemption. Discipline is too often equated with punishment (especially in the minds of students) while, in fact, discipline is an almost continuous practice in a healthy school or boarding home environment. In this sense, discipline means a way of viewing or understanding the world. It means to follow a certain method in understanding things (such as in the disciplines of chemistry, or of anthropology), just as being a disciple means to follow a certain person. Discipline, then,

means instruction, learning and shaping for the student—imparting an understanding and a consistent way of pursuing knowledge, competency and viewing the world. It means consistency in behavior and following a certain standard with integrity. In an MK school, an undergirding discipline—that of God’s perspective—should be in the warp and woof of everyday life. Punishment, important as a means of teaching the consequences of certain behaviors, then becomes only a small part of a greater discipline. When applied in its broad sense, and lovingly lived out, it brings consistency, predictability, security and confidence.

***Outcome Concepts:******Conscience, Confidence, Competence and Character***

A hoped for outcome of the school experience is that the student emerges with godly character and the competencies for continuing successfully in his or her development with happiness and satisfaction. Attendant to these are the internal qualities of conscience and confidence. Conscience is built through an understanding of the precepts of Scripture and the examples of integrity and application of them in relationships. Confidence is built by realistic encouragement, security in relationships and a sense of inclusion and belonging.

Conscience and confidence become strong anchors in the building of character which, rooted and grounded in Christ, is a stable, lifelong quality. Competencies are built through direct teaching, studying, hands-on experiences and participation in relationship. These include technical, intellectual, and academic knowledge and skills important for further education and career development, but also those internal skills and understandings so necessary to engage joyfully and responsibly in mature relationships and self-understanding.

The staff member who has participated in helping the student develop these as outcomes of the school experience can deservedly feel a sense of satisfaction, hope for the student’s future, and perhaps a deep sense of gratitude for participation in this process. And the “arrow” thus sent forth will find its mark in the joy and satisfaction of the Lord through whatever path its flight through life takes.

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## Part V:

# Educational Issues

### Resolution IV

#### *Culturally Sensitive Education*

Whereas most educational systems and family services in an MK's country of citizenship are designed to help people function well as citizens of that county, and

Whereas the MK community has become increasingly diversified culturally and nationally, and

Whereas it is not practical to develop separate educational programs which seek to duplicate the educational systems of every nationality working in a geographic region,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi commit themselves to continue pursuing creative ways to adapt and supplement programs to meet the educational needs of MKs from various nationalities, to give all MKs a sense of ownership in their own language and culture, and to develop and implement educational approaches which will enable students to transcend the limitations of their own culture.

Resolution XII

***Ministry of MK Education***

Whereas for over a century God has faithfully called missionaries to care for MKs, and

Whereas the dedicated service of individuals committed to MK education is an integral part of the entire mission endeavor,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi commit themselves to support and encourage those who have been called to the ministry of MK education.

Resolution XIII

***Educational Choice***

Whereas in his great goodness God has called families into cross-cultural service, he has also made provision for the educational needs of MKs in a variety of ways, including: MK boarding schools and day schools, home schooling, national schools, and options within secular settings, and

Whereas missionary parents are sometimes challenged about the educational choices of their children,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi wish to express thanks to God for these provisions and offer our continuing support for the available options and subsequent parental decisions that follow.

**26.**

***Identifying Issues and Defining Terms***

**Brian V. Hill**

As we consider the complex issues related to education in international settings, it is helpful to look at *Five Criteria of Adequacy* for suitable answers to the questions that are being raised:

***1. Understanding of Education***

Education is more than schooling. Schooling is a blunt instrument which is mainly effective in imparting content. It does not necessarily impart critical thinking. It is not always strong on the relational side. It is very weak, because of its highly structured form, in encouraging responsibility and personal initiative. We should see education as including schooling but involving other people as well as trained teachers. Parents are very influential in the education of boys and girls in informal settings.

If we are convinced that students at the end of year twelve must be able to go straight into the university systems of their respective parent cultures, then we are mortgaging the whole of the K–12 years to that higher educational set of objectives. Why not let the first ten years be what we want them to be? Then the last two years—or three if necessary—can concentrate on the particular national requirements that we have decided, in consultation with our children, are what they need. Why must twelve or thirteen years be given over to the models of the parental culture?

The curriculum cycle, as we traditionally understand it, is to identify our aims and objectives, then determine what content is needed to fulfill these objectives. We also think about teaching methods and assessment. The step we miss is what should come immediately after identifying our aims and objectives: Which learning environments are we going to need to fulfill these objectives? The answer won't always be "school." For many aspects of our children's education, the answer will be something else. So, we need an adequate understanding of education.

## 2. Estimate of Persons

It is very easy to become preoccupied with subject matter that is required in the parental culture. Or, we might feel we are more holy because we are preoccupied with conversion. We sometimes try to use the blunt instrument of schooling to guarantee that children will be committed to the Lord, which is an invasion of their holy right to be responsible for their own choices.

Self-determination is an aspect of the doctrine of persons and must figure prominently in any adequate theory of education. Sometimes we treat children as commodities, as investments. The church sometimes treats them as property and uses protectionist policies to guarantee that they will stay within its ranks. It is easy to forget that Jesus took risks with people, and sometimes what he said to them caused them to leave his ranks. Jesus respected their powers of self-determination: the God-given right and capacity to be autonomous in their choices and responsible for those choices.

## 3. Appreciation of Culture

We need to understand the acculturation process and the extent to which we are victims of our own cultural conditioning. In treating multiculturalism as a value we are able to begin to move away from simply repeating our own cultural conditioning in our children. That sometimes means that *we* have to be re-educated before we are able to help our children understand the value of multiculturalism. A further step is understanding the importance of transcending one's own culture, and transcending our respect for existing cultures with a viewpoint which enables us to see that all cultures fall short in some respects, and we are to seek first the Kingdom of God.

## 4. Vision of Our Mission

Our mission as Christians is essentially cross-cultural. It is essentially to bring the good news to all cultures, including our own. And that mission needs internationalists: young people who, without losing pride in their parental culture, have grasped the larger vision of a world for God. And I do not just mean *multinationalists*, able to get on with people

from other nations in discourse, but *internationalists* because they have a vision for the world which is capable of carrying them beyond some of their own cultural prejudices. There is no group of people in the world which has more potential to become internationalists than the children of missionaries.

## 5. Set of Definitions

The word *multicultural* has been used in a variety of ways. It would help if we restricted the use of this term to identifying a value we want to promote, not a fact we happen to observe in the classroom. A classroom is not automatically multicultural because it has many children with different cultural backgrounds. The classroom may in fact be effectively monocultural or ethnocentric because one curriculum predominates. That is not a *multicultural* classroom; it is a *multinational* classroom. It might even be better to use the term *multi-ethnic* because, for example, just to say that there were a number of American students in our class might obscure the fact that some are Hispanic American and others are WASP American. Those differences are worth noting, too. So maybe *multi-ethnic* is a better term.

Multiculturalism as a value means embracing the richness of different cultures and seeking to benefit and to learn from each other. Being multicultural is an aspect of the creation of God, the way we were made. It is not the same as *multifaith*, or some kind of religious universalism in which every religion gets its own little share of the estate.

*Cross-cultural* vs. *transcultural* is another definition problem. By *cross-cultural* we mean accommodating the needs of people from various nationalities and trying to cross cultures. "Multinational" and "multicultural" are terms that have different meanings already in that sphere. "*Transcultural*" is sometimes used in the same way.

The term *transcultural* refers to the attempt to get above culture, transcend culture, and appreciate how we become acculturated so that we can critically observe and inspect our own cultural background.

Some say their school staffs are multinational. Be careful! Most of the time they are referring to North American and European. We have hardly begun to grapple with the prospect of having to meet the

requirements of Asian curriculum, in addition to the long-deified A levels and European curriculums.

### Summary

There are *five criteria of adequacy* we must meet which are foundational to implementing the perspective we have developed. We need:

- an adequate understanding of education
- an adequate estimate of persons (our doctrine of persons must be adequately Scriptural)
- an adequate appreciation of culture (how it happens and how it is to be transcended)
- an adequate vision of mission
- an adequate set of definitions

We need an *adequate mental set* toward the whole set of issues. Every potential disadvantage of education in an expatriate situation has the potential to be an advantage. The child of missionaries living in a cross-cultural environment experiences some difficulties, but also opportunities for growth denied children in their largely monocultural home cultures. The necessity for individual or self-study and the problems it poses for boys and girls working without the company of same-culture peers can be, if well-designed and in good hands, a more efficient way of learning than mass-production schooling. All elements are negotiable.

### Definitions of Transcultural Terms

It is helpful to work from the descriptive to the evaluative. A descriptive term is one we start with.

**Acculturation** simply means growing up and acquiring a culture. The process of acculturation, similar to socialization, is the sum of all the ways people enter the culture of their elders. It can occur deliberately through formal education, but often occurs informally. One may become acculturated in a very conditioned way or with a critically aware sense of what is happening.

**Ethnocentricity** is an attitude reflecting the sort of acculturation which creates firm, through uncritical, conviction that one's own culture is superior to all others. Ethnocentricity is often very brittle and leads to defensiveness. People are not sure why they feel so powerfully convinced that they or their culture is superior, so any suggestion to the contrary is seen as threatening.

**Multi-ethnic** is a descriptive term. It identifies the fact that in a particular group there are people from several different ethnic backgrounds. Multicultural is used in a similar descriptive sense as well as an evaluative sense.

**Multi-faith** is a descriptive term indicating the group includes individuals of different religious backgrounds. It doesn't imply what beliefs or attitudes people have about different religions.

The term **multicultural** is often used interchangeably with *multiethnic* and *multi-faith*. We can use the word multicultural descriptively to say that a group consists of people of many cultures and that in that sense it is a synonym for multi-ethnic. It shouldn't be used as a synonym for multi-faith, because that equates faith and culture. The word multi-cultural is sometimes used to identify people whose backgrounds are different from the dominant majority culture. To say that a child is multi-cultural is an atrocious usage! A child may be *bicultural*, but even there the meaning is unclear. It is better to say that children are participating cross-culturally; their background consists of more than one culture.

The term **multiculturalism** is clearly a value word which describes a policy, a preference, for encouraging the interaction between cultural groups. The opposite is monoculturalism, trying to preserve the superiority of one culture, a form of ethnocentricity. Monoculturalism and ethnocentricity are essentially synonyms.

**Multinational** is a descriptive term for a group where there are people with several different national backgrounds. Multinational and multicultural are fairly interchangeable terms, though not completely. The fact that a particular group is *multinational in composition* says nothing about whether they are *multicultural in intent*. They may, in fact, be in conflict because most of them are ethnocentric. Multinational

merely describes the fact that there are members of several different nations in that group.

**Transcultural** is not just *cross-cultural*, mingling information from various cultures. It is an attempt to stand above culture and understand how it works on us. It is an attempt to transcend cultural influences and to get more control of our own consciousness and behavior, through understanding how culture conditions us.

**Cross-cultural** is an evaluative term identifying a policy about several cultures, which makes it the same as *multicultural*. In cross-cultural activities, a group from different cultures does things together. Cross-cultural activities can be a way of promoting multiculturalism.

We must be clear whether we are using these words in the *descriptive* way to explain a fact—this group is cross-cultural or this group is multi-ethnic—or commending a value or policy. Those are two different ways of using words. *Multi-culturalism* is a value judgment; a policy to be promoted.

Some of the words are synonymous. Multi-ethnic and multinational are nearly synonymous, though it may sometimes be useful to draw the distinction. Sometimes multicultural is used descriptively as a synonym for cross-cultural.

Adapted from presentations at ICMK Nairobi, November 1989.

## 27. *The Christian School in a Missions Context*

**Richard J. Edlin**

This chapter will address a broad range of issues regarding the Christian school, whether an MK school (designed for missionary children) or a local Christian school which serves MKs as well as other children. First, we will consider one of the great challenges such schools face.

Missionary teachers are a dedicated group of people who derive much joy and satisfaction from their profession. However, there is a crisis of confidence among many missionary schoolteachers. The problem is that many teachers in MK schools are seen as “second-class” missionaries, who carry out the Great Commission only if they involve themselves in outreach programs outside of school hours.

The high MK teacher attrition rate, which is one consequence of this problem, has drastic consequences for the care and nurture of MKs and for the overall implementation of the Great Commission. Many missionary schools have annual staff turnover rates of between 40 and 60 percent. This impacts all of the families on the field, as children lack continuity in the school. Also, new teachers’ lack of cross-cultural competency means that they may have a reduced ability to educate and nurture the MKs under their care in a culturally sensitive way. Finally, continuity and development in curriculum are difficult to attain.

This situation has serious implications for the whole life of the mission. As one mission administrator commented, “When the MK school is happy, the whole mission is happy; but when the MK school is having problems, the whole mission suffers.” Unhappiness with children’s education is a common cause of missionary attrition.

The consignment of the MK teacher to a second-class status is derived from a poor understanding of just what Jesus called his people to do in the Great Commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:18–20.

### ***The Service Task of the Missionary School***

The solution to the problem is a biblical perspective. In order to understand the Great Commission in relation to teachers in missionary schools, we need to be reminded of the three functions of an MK school: *service, outreach, and discipleship*.

MK school purpose statements make clear that a core reason for their existence is the provision of quality, culturally sensitive education to MKs. With this assurance, missionary parents can engage in their own activities and know that their children's educational needs are being met.

The church planter in the jungle, the pastor working in the urban slum, and the treasurer in the mission office, are all more able to fulfill their tasks because of the help of others who are teaching their children.

Teachers have been entrusted by the Lord with the high calling of servanthood. Our Lord came not to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28) and modeled this characteristic for us on that memorable occasion recorded in when he washed his disciples' feet.

### ***The Outreach Task of the Missionary School***

Yes, even MKs need the Lord. The lives of the faculty and the nature of the curriculum should present an exciting celebration of the Lordship of Christ over his world and the challenges to all of us to respond. When adult MKs speak about their experiences at MK schools, many concerns are expressed, but one enduring cause for praise to God is the formative influence of their missionary school and its staff on their personal spiritual growth. When MKs see in their teachers the love of God and obedience to his commands, they are led to know, love, worship, and serve the Lord.

Another exciting aspect to this ministry is that many missionary schools have opened their doors to other students—expatriates and nationals, who present further outreach opportunities. Outreach to national children has incredible potential. Missionaries often lament the difficulty of reaching the upper socioeconomic classes of society, from which most of the leaders in politics, commerce, medicine, law, and education come. This the same group that missionary schools often find besieging them with requests for the enrollment of their children.

Missionary schools have a vital ministry upon influential *expatriate* leaders and their families. Several years ago, when communism still dominated Eastern Europe, evangelist Billy Graham was able to conduct a series of meetings behind the Iron Curtain. In Hungary he had the chance to speak to a huge youth rally, but he needed an interpreter—one who was young, fluent in English and the local language, and a Christian, so that he could faithfully translate the Christian message. Where could they find such a person in a communist-controlled country?

They found one. His parents had been diplomats in Africa, where he was sent to the local missionary school and became a Christian. Later the family went home to Hungary. When Billy Graham was looking for a Christian youth to translate for him, here he was, a Christian because of the witness of a school in Africa! Our missionary schools and their teachers are a vital part of the worldwide ministry of evangelism.

### ***The Discipleship Task of the Missionary School***

The third function of the MK school is discipleship. This is the area of greatest misunderstanding of the Great Commission and its application to the MK school. In Matthew 28:17–20, Jesus did not say “Go and make converts of all nations”; he instructed his followers to “make disciples of all nations.” The difference between what Jesus *actually* said and what many people *think* he said is central to understanding the missionary calling and the task of the missionary school.

Conversion is only the first step in discipleship. If the Christian life were fully accomplished at conversion, then we would not possess much of the New Testament. Paul's letters to Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi were written to people who were already Christians. Yet, in these letters, Paul was still carrying out the Great Commission by encouraging Christians, strengthening their faith, and instructing them. He was teaching them to observe all that the Lord had taught.

The Great Commission, in all its fullness, includes the process of conversion and then teaching and nurturing people in Christ's way. Except for the church and the family, there are few other institutions in society more centrally concerned with this nurturing discipleship process than the missionary school. As teachers explore with their students the

nature of the world and the students' places and tasks in it, their teaching should be done in such a vibrant and exciting way as to challenge the students in all areas of life. The nurturing and discipleship that each teacher engages in with students is at the heart of the Great Commission.

Praise God for the service ministry, outreach ministry, and discipleship ministry of the missionary school. Let us be faithful in prayer for them as they have the blessing and great responsibility of working with young people, as partners with missionary parents, in nurturing and challenging students to live for Christ in all corners of the globe.

### ***Culturally Sensitive Education in the Missionary School***

Missionary schools are very concerned that they be culturally sensitive. Often, the pressure has come from mission boards that see effective missionaries leaving the field because the mission school is only preparing its students for college in North America or the United Kingdom. There are also sound educational and developmental reasons that provide a firm foundation for this development. In order to consider these, we must define what is meant by the term "cultural sensitivity," and see how it functions in two important dimensions.

*Cultural sensitivity* may be defined in our context as the development of patterns that show an *awareness of and responsiveness to the varied cultural backgrounds, realities, and aspirations of the whole school community*. Some parents have feared that the development of cultural sensitivity will result in the denial of culture or being robbed of one's cultural identity and heritage. This is not the case. In fact, the purpose for cultural sensitivity in an MK school is the opposite—to affirm the cultural roots and heritages of all of the students in the school.

It will recognize both the successes and failures of different cultures and will evaluate them all from a biblical perspective.

A simple example of cultural sensitivity is the teaching of the concept of money and decimalization. When the concept of money is taught to younger grades, it should be taught using the decimal currency of the country where the students live. Once the *concept* of money and decimalization has been established, a culturally sensitive teacher will encourage students, with the help of their families, to discover and share the decimalization currency pattern of their own particular homelands. In

this way, the cultures of all the students are affirmed and taught. In addition, the children are being immediately prepared to function in the culture in which they currently are living.

Cultural sensitivity has two dimensions: an external sensitivity to the culture surrounding the school, and an internal dimension to the multiple cultures represented within the school. Each of these dimensions has its own special considerations.

### ***The External Dimension of Cultural Sensitivity***

In this dimension, the MK school recognizes and responds to its location, usually in a third-world country that has its own distinctive language and patterns of life. Understanding and appreciation of the culture that surrounds them is a part of the unique heritage of MKs. A lively, vibrant culture surrounds every MK school, and MKs have the right to be acculturated into that environment. While retaining their own passport culture, the children will absorb parts of their host culture as well. The parents and the school have the delightful task of assisting them to do this in an exciting and God-honoring way. Some competency in the local language and a practical familiarity with the local culture are the adopted birthright of all MKs.

Adults are often more reticent than children to make cultural adjustments. Missionary parents who are reluctant to "get their feet wet" culturally in their country of ministry can be led and assisted by their children. Most cultures look fondly upon children, and MKs can assist their parents in developing cross-cultural relationships. MK schools can be excellent catalysts in this process.

The external dimension of cultural sensitivity also includes the calling to be salt and light wherever the Lord has placed us. The MK school should encourage students to look at ways that they can be God's ambassadors to that culture, not in a paternalistic or imperialistic context but in humble service to God.

One of the most exciting features of MK schools around the world is the way that they carry out this second level of external cultural sensitivity and actively minister to the culture around them. Morrison Academy in Taiwan has student-based sports and music outreach pro-

grams. Black Forest Academy in Germany has students ministering not only to the surrounding community but to Eastern European refugee camps as well. At the Alliance Academy in Quito, Ecuador, most students are involved in dynamic, school-based, voluntary community outreach programs. Carachipampa Christian School in Cochabamba, Bolivia, has a student missions program that ministers to native Indians in villages in the Amazon jungle. No wonder a large percentage of MKs become leaders in their adult lives and that many of them return as missionaries themselves to the country in which they received their MK education!

### ***The Internal Dimension of Cultural Sensitivity***

The internal dimension of cultural sensitivity is the sensitivity to and affirmation of all of the cultures represented in the school. One culture may provide more resources than another. For example, if the MK school a majority of its students aiming at college education in North America, then it is appropriate for North American educational patterns to be very obvious. However, this should not be at the expense of a sensitivity to the culture around the school and to the backgrounds, realities, and aspirations of students who come from non-North American backgrounds.

It may seem impossible to establish educational patterns that are culturally sensitive and diverse in the history syllabus, the school's resource and textbook base, or assessment and evaluation. A creative teamwork approach to the educational task, however, does make it possible. There are four components to successful implementation of internal cultural sensitivity: teamwork, a Christian responsive curriculum model, a conceptual or thematic approach to instruction, and a proper view and use of resources.

### ***Teamwork***

MK schools not only incorporate a large cultural diversity in the student body, but the teachers may also come from many different countries. Teachers tend to teach from the basis of their own culture and training, and educational methodologies differ widely around the world. Ask a

teacher from New Zealand and one from a Christian school in Florida to discuss the best way of teaching children to read, and just watch the sparks fly! If all the teachers operate in their classrooms on the basis of their own educational training and experience, there is potential for a severely fragmented educational program.

In the Christian international school, however, the basic reality is not that the teachers are divided by culture, but that they are united in Christ. While they do not all accept New Zealand or Holland's educational methods as the correct way of teaching, they should all accept the authority of the Bible and Christian presuppositions as the standards for all of life, including education. Christian teachers from many cultures can dig beneath their diverse cultural prejudices for a common biblical foundation for the educational task. In this way, discussion about the life of the school becomes creative and constructive. Once a biblically based foundation has been laid, then teachers can use the experience of their own cultural backgrounds, and their awareness of the needs of their students, to develop educational structures that are uniquely appropriate in the school in which they are serving.

For this cooperative educational structure to occur, the school board and administration must cultivate the concept of *the team of teachers* within the life of the school. We should never operate as if our own cultural heritages are the bottom line for us. We should recognize the *a priori* foundation of the Bible and subject all of our attitudes and perspectives to its supranational searching gaze.

In the MK school situation, faculty have responded to the call of God to be teachers in that school. Often, they are not paid a salary by the school but have raised support in the same manner as other faith missionaries. They have left their home cultures and comforts in response to God's call. They are fellow workers together with the administration and should be recognized as a team. Under the direction and leadership of the school administration, all teachers should be provided with the opportunity and responsibility of providing significant input and direction into the life of the school. Team ownership, commitment, and direction are all vital to the successful development of internal cultural sensitivity.

### ***A Christian, Responsive Curriculum Development Model***

Curriculum development in all Christian schools should be based upon biblical principles. A model explaining this is found in Chapter 6 of *The Cause of Christian Education* by Richard Edlin. That model has been attractive to MK schools because after establishing a sound biblical basis for the curriculum development process, it directs its users to closely examine the nature of the student community. The model keeps the nature of the students in the forefront as later-stage curriculum development steps are taken: the determination of aims and objectives, selection of resource materials, and assessment procedures. By highlighting a sensitivity to the background, present realities, and future expectations of the student body, this curriculum development model provides an important structural tool for developing internal cultural sensitivity in the international Christian school. Also, see Chapter 42 in this volume.

### ***A Proper Place for Textbooks***

If the textbooks are the prime determiner of the school's instructional program, the school will never be culturally sensitive. Texts are written from particular cultural as well as religious perspectives. A book written in Canada will probably be written by Canadians for Canadian schools. If an MK school allows this text to determine its classroom program, then the classroom program will highlight a Canadian view of the world in both content and perspective. It may well be entirely appropriate to use books from Canada in the multinational MK school (in fact, some excellent MK schools do exactly that), but these books should be used because they meet the school's pre-designed curriculum and student patterns, not because they create these patterns.

Schools that seek to be culturally sensitive must take control of their own curriculum development processes. Resources such as textbooks and video programs should be tools, not determiners, of the educational program. MK teachers must recognize their God-given talents and use them as a team to shape an educational program.

### ***A Thematic Approach to Teaching***

Even with a correct understanding of the place of texts and other resources in a multinational, international, or MK school, the development of a multifaceted program that is culturally sensitive will be difficult in a traditionally structured classroom where all students study the same content material all the time. How is it possible, for example, in a fifth-grade class in Hong Kong with students from twelve different countries in the same room, to implement a culturally-sensitive curriculum development model?

The answer lies in developing an integrated and thematic approach to teaching. The focus is on the skills and concepts the teacher wishes to convey to the students as the organizing feature of the learning and teaching environment.

For example, in a social studies class, the teacher may focus on the concepts that all societies organize themselves into family structures and develop a system of law and order. She could then teach content material that illustrates this with places, dates, geographical and sociological detail, and biblical analysis of the resulting patterns, using one of the cultures represented in her classroom. She may choose to use as her illustration the culture of the majority of her students (often U.S.), the culture of the country that the school is in, or perhaps the culture of a newly arrived MK so as to give him a sense of belonging and familiarity.

After this, perhaps in groups, the class will take the *concepts* of family and law and order and apply them to other cultures such as their own. In this way, no one culture is discriminated against, and all students learn about their own heritage. Obviously, textbooks must be resources and not determiners of the program in this method.

The value of this pattern is enhanced when combined with an integrated approach to teaching where material related to different subject areas is linked into the theme or concept being taught. Grade school teachers, and particularly teachers from British Commonwealth countries, often are particularly adept at this pattern of teaching. High school or secondary teachers in the teaching team could well benefit from visiting the classrooms of these colleagues to learn this creative, culturally sensitive pattern of teaching from their own resident experts.

### ***Non-English-Speaking MKs***

In recent years, with the arrival of increasing numbers of non-English speaking missionaries, MK schools have become aware of the obligation to address the educational needs of children from non-English speaking backgrounds. The strategies already suggested are useful in this context, but the added factor of multiple languages within the same classroom has heightened the complexity of the issue. The matter is made even more sensitive with regard to Asian missionary families, because of the very closely structured nature of their home cultures.

A Korean missionary schoolteacher has commented that the single act of taking Korean children overseas and away from their home culture means that those children probably never will be able to fit comfortably back into that home culture again. It is important for mission boards to recruit teachers like her to circulate and assist Korean children to maintain and develop an awareness of things Korean. However, because of the tight structure of her own culture, she believes that even the development of a totally Korean school in another country would not guarantee cultural re-entry of graduates to Korea. This re-entry question deserves much closer attention by mission boards.

Exciting initiatives are being taken to address these issues. In some situations, MK schools have developed minischools within the school to provide a culturally oriented program for non-English language groups that both retains their native cultural and linguistic development and also integrates these students with the rest of the school for much of the day. In other locations, mission boards have appointed schoolteachers from minority-country cultures who travel and visit the children from that culture and assist them in retaining appropriate cultural ties. Other potential solutions are still needed.

This issue of appropriately addressing the needs of non-English-speaking MKs will become increasingly important in the decades ahead as the reality of the post-Christian culture in the West reduces the flow of missionaries from that part of the world and the flow of missionaries from the Far East and the Third World increases even further.

### ***MK Schools and Boarding***

All missionary parents, past and present, who have sent children to MK boarding schools, would see the family as a God-given institution. They would also agree that effective role modeling and nurturing is a task given by God to parents. To suggest or imply that they feel this any less deeply than parents of children who have not been sent to boarding school runs the risk of being judgmental and arrogantly self-righteous.

Parents of MKs at boarding schools acknowledge that they and their children have experienced grief and pain and that there have been instances of an unsavory nature surrounding the boarding experiences of some MKs. However, this is no argument against boarding. If the existence of pain and regrettable happenings were reasons to reject something, then none of us would qualify to be parents!

In a discussion of the legitimacy of MK boarding schools, the matter of the acceptance of this practice by many fine Christian families over past decades has often been raised. Were they all wrong and is the current generation all right? This argument is too simplistic to be useful. The environment of the 1990s, especially with regard to communications and travel, is quite different from that of earlier generations.

How do we best evaluate this child care option that some Christians castigate and others champion? Part of the answer might come in a re-examination of the concept of the Christian family. The *nuclear* family of the last six decades or so is a construction of contemporary society and is not necessarily the biblical model. It is important for us as Christians to support the family, but to revere it above all else is idolatry.

In the context of admonishing parents to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, the Bible also reminds us of the accompanying responsibility of the church in this task. This is why during infant baptism or child dedication the congregation is asked corporately to ally itself with the parents in the proper nurture and training of the children being presented. The biblical concept of family is significantly different from the strict nuclear family rigidity that is sometimes promoted.

I suspect that the story of Hannah and Samuel makes very disconcerting reading for those who denounce missionary parents for sending

their children to boarding schools. We read in 1 Samuel 1:1–28 that Hannah dedicated her son to the Lord. She carried out her dedication in a very special way, however, entrusting her son to the care and nurture of the religious community. She sent him, as a young boy, to the temple to be brought up and serve the Lord there. God blessed her faith in a marvelous way in the life of Samuel.

Hannah did not do this with her other children, but we should think long and hard before we reproach her for what she did. In a real sense, one aspect of her dedication and divine worship was her recognition of the corporate responsibility of the people of God in nurturing her son. The same mentality characterizes the decisionmaking of many missionary parents who enlist the aid of dorm parents in the nurture of their children.

The experience of Jesus when his parents left him behind in Jerusalem as a boy could lead to a criticism of Mary and Joseph for being inadequate parents. However, as we read that story in Luke 2:41–51, we see another biblical example of the corporate responsibility of the people of God in child nurture. Mary and Joseph were not worried at first that Jesus was not with them personally, because they thought that “he was with their company.” In other words, they thought that Jesus was with the extended family or friends who had journeyed together to Jerusalem. Care for Jesus in the company of God’s people obviously was considered to be appropriate for the Son of God by his earthly parents. A similar philosophy characterizes the use of MK boarding homes by missionary families.

As parents, we recognize the importance of the help of others in rearing of our children. When I take my own children to the doctor, the trombone teacher, or the summer camp counselor, I am not abrogating my responsibility as a parent. I am exercising my parental responsibility by entrusting my children to the care of people who can give them something that I am not able to provide.

Not everyone should consider it appropriate to send their children to a boarding school. In fact, there will be many situations where missionaries rightly choose otherwise. Factors such as the age of the child, his or her personality, location, the perspective of the home culture, and personal interactions within the home may lead parents to decide against boarding. Generally speaking, we should affirm this choice. However,

we should not condemn Christian parents for believing that boarding is part of what the Lord has called *them* to do. We need to encourage the recognition of the importance of a biblical, rather than cultural, concept of the family.

We should promote the importance of the church family in assisting with the nurture of children, and we should encourage missionary parents and their supporters to realize that there is a biblical perspective within which to consider the choice of boarding school. It should also be acknowledged that some cultures view boarding as appropriate even in the home country, and other cultures view it as little short of child abuse. These cultural perspectives are part of the social background of missionary parents as they make choices about boarding.

The boarding experience has changed significantly from what some MKs experienced in years gone by. Missionary parents often say that it is not the children who attend boarding school who feel deprived, but those who are left behind at home! Going home from boarding school is more frequent than in previous decades, and the biblical concept of *nurture* as opposed to *child-minding* has become much more important. In addition, mission boards have developed other options such as satellite schools to enable younger children to stay at home.

We must support those who champion the biblical family. We also need to accept the fact that spiritually sensitive, mature Christians can legitimately be convinced that it is the right thing for them to send their children to a proper, caring MK boarding school where the children are entrusted for a time to competent dorm parents.

We should use our energies in a constructive manner and devote ourselves to helping boarding schools to be the very best help that they can be in service to missionary families. Pre-field orientation for MK school personnel (see Chapter 43) should be strongly supported.

### ***MK Schools and Accreditation***

Accreditation has long been accepted in North America as a way of promoting self-improvement and verifying educational quality in schools. In other countries, this process is known as school inspection. In 1992, ACSI developed an accreditation instrument for use in missionary

schools outside of North America. It compares a school's situation to a set of well-established and recognized educational standards. It also provides a pattern for developmental and self-improvement programs such as curriculum design, evaluation, and assessment.

The ACSI document has several unique features that make it very attractive to MK schools. ACSI Overseas Schools Accreditation has been designed specifically for the international environment. It highlights an investigation into the Christian philosophical base of the school and the way a Christian world and life view filters through the school. It also is designed to investigate and stimulate a school's cultural sensitivity.

In the area of philosophy of education, for example, an accredited school must have a program for training teachers in a Christian philosophy of education. This is important in an MK school where many of the teachers come from secular school backgrounds where educational methodologies were framed by secular humanist presuppositions.

The intention of the Christian philosophy of education course is to expose the teachers to a Christian way of thinking about education and to have them prepare a personal response to this. First, teachers study resources which explain biblical foundations for Christian education. Second, the teachers produce a paper for their administrator or headmaster which outlines their own personal philosophy of education, reveals the biblical foundations for their position, and illustrates how it affects what they do in the classroom. Teachers are challenged to think about the educational process from a distinctively Christian point of view and to respond in a personal and practical way.

School accreditation is important to missionary families because it reassures them that independent educators have verified the philosophical integrity of the school and the educational competency of its programs. It also provides an important verification of the school's student transcripts when they apply for entry into college.

Accreditation is important to mission boards because it serves as an educational audit of the school in the same way that a good financial audit verifies and publicly recognizes the mission's fiscal accountability and good standing. For teachers, it provides a stimulus and framework for self-improvement and recognition as well as encouragement for a job well done. It also allows many U.S. teachers to maintain their state

teacher certification by meeting the requirement that they must teach in an accredited school.

The calling to be a missionary teacher is a great blessing and honor. MK schools serve the kingdom of God by their ministries to the missions community, the expatriate community, and the indigenous community in a unique and effective manner. Let us praise God and pray for the students and teachers in these schools, and lay the challenge of teaching in an MK school before Christian teachers.

Abridged, with minor editing, from *The Cause of Christian Education* (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994), Chapter 9.

## 28.

### *Options for MK Education*

#### **Joyce M. Bowers**

When parents with dependent children are called into ministry, God calls the whole family. The model of healthy family relationships can communicate biblical principles, even when language barriers prevent verbal communication.

Schooling options play a major role in who children become, “educating” them in areas far beyond the academics. Each option has unique strengths and benefits, and the choices you make require as much prayer and guidance as other ministry-related decisions.

Every schooling option provides richness in ways others cannot. No one schooling option is broad enough to encourage development of all the skills, abilities, and attitudes you will want your children to acquire to be ready to live independently when the time comes. This is especially true if your children spend most of their growing-up years in an isolated setting overseas, and you want them to be prepared to live successfully one day in your home country. Look for comprehensiveness and balance over your children’s *total* school career.

Many families find that a long-term “family education plan” helps them to be aware and take advantage of the different schooling options that will support them in fostering this broad range of skills, attitudes, and values. A family education plan takes into consideration the furlough or home assignment cycle, and opportunities or activities available in the home country but not in the ministry setting.

#### ***Issues to Consider***

Early years in a ministry setting are the best time for children to learn the national language and build relationships in the culture. Also, if they will be living away from their parents later on, it helps them feel more involved in the ministry if they know the people their parents are ministering to and understand what their lives are like.

One of the most difficult decisions in MK education is whether or not to send children to boarding school. However, research has shown

that the quality of a child’s relationship to parents is of far more significance to healthy development than whether or not he or she attends a boarding school.

The teen years are very important for identity development. National schools or isolation from home country peers may become inappropriate during adolescence, if children are to identify themselves as citizens of their passport country as adults. Building close relationships with a variety of Christian adults helps teens “separate” from their parents and encourages them to claim as their own Christian beliefs and values modeled in other adults they admire.

(This section was excerpted by permission from “Family Education Plan” by Sharon Haag, *Parents Teaching Overseas*, June 1996.)

#### ***Features of Educational Options***

The following are brief summaries of features of different types of schooling available to missionary families. Of course, not all options are available in every location. See Chapter 29 for a discussion of how to make good choices of educational options available.

#### ***Home Schooling***

- One-on-one instruction in a caring, flexible setting
- Opportunity to impart family values
- Requires large time commitment on part of one or both parents
- Parent(s) must be able to step in and out of the parent vs. teach role and not see this as a hindrance to their relationship with the child.
- Child has limited exposure to authority figures other than parents.

For more information, see “Home Schooling in the Missions Context” by Paul Nelson, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, April 1988.

### ***Correspondence Courses or Distance Learning***

#### **Traditional**

- Parents do teaching as in home schooling, but do not evaluate student's progress.
- Lessons are sent to the school for grading or evaluation.
- Slow or unreliable mail service creates significant difficulties.

#### **New Developments**

- Electronic communication, if available, makes distance learning a much more viable option.
- Models are being developed in Australia.

For more information, see "Distance Education: How Far Away Is It?" by Patti Hoyt, *Interact*, May 1997.

### ***Assisted Home Schooling***

- Assistance from MK school in larger population center
- Children on same curriculum as MK school
- Access to library and other learning resources, such as videos
- Participation in field days and special programs at MK school
- May spend periods of time in MK school classroom
- Relationship with the school provides easier transition for later boarding.
- Requires commitment on the part of the school administration and teachers
- Some schools have a full-time staff person specifically for advising and assisting home schoolers.
- Central and Eastern Europe and C.I.R.: SHARE program
- Resource center may be provided by MK school.
- Resource center may be jointly organized by families.

- In some situations, assistance may be available from tutors or itinerant teachers.

For more information see "Serving Our Extended Community: How MK Schools Can Minister to Home Schooling Families" by Betty Engelhardt and Don Williams, *World Report*, April/May 1997.

"Expanding Schools' Vision for Supporting Homeschoolers" by Sharon Haag, *Interact*, February 1996.

"SHARE: Providing Resources for Eastern Europe" by Janet Blomberg, *Interact*, May 1994.

"A Cooperative Effort for Nurturing MK Children: The SSS Program" by Bruce Hekman, *Interact*, March 1992.

"Relationships with Tutors and Itinerant Teachers: Making It Work!" by Sharon Haag, *Parents Teaching Overseas*, July 1993.

### ***Cooperative Home Schooling***

- Several families join together for school of five to ten children.
- Curriculum provided by home schooling programs.
- Provides academic and social stimulation of other children
- Requires commitment and adaptability on part of all parents
- Requires less time than "pure" home schooling, but is less flexible
- May be done with an international curriculum and a group of students
- Character is developed through give and take with others who think differently.
- Can be done with limited resources, a few students, and untrained teachers
- Requires creativity, commitment, love for children, and dependence on God for wisdom and guidance

For more information, see:

"Home Schooling—Cooperative Style: A New Option in MK Education" by Diane Morris, *Interact*, February 1993.

“Establishing a Cooperative Home School” by Janet R. Blomberg, *Interact*, February 1993.

“Walking the Road to Emmaus: Parents Share in Cooperative Home Schooling” by Dr. David Brooks and Linda Clifton, *Interact*, May 1994.

### ***Small Classroom or Multigrade Classroom***

- Satellite Schools similar to old-fashioned “one-room school-house”
- Homey atmosphere good for developing strong friendships and learning to be productive members of groups
- May be part of a field education system
- Usually has ten or more full-time students
- Regular meeting place set aside for education
- At least one full-time teacher with training and credentials
- Has a governing body with a written policies and philosophy or mission statement
- Has equipment adequate to achieve the objectives of the educational program
- Finances are handled with planning and care.
- Clear maintenance of records (attendance, progress, and health)

For more information, see:

“The Multigrade Classroom: Can It Work for You?” by Donna Crawford, *Interact*, May 1997.

“Quality Education for New and Small Schools: Planning for Improvement” by David K. Wilcox, *World Report*, February/March 1996.

“Satellite Schools: A New Option in MK Education” by David F. Brooks, *Interact*, February 1993, along with “A Principal’s Perspective” and “A Teacher’s Perspective” in the same issue.

### ***National Schools—Public or Private***

- Help the family fit better into the local community and culture
- Provide linguistic fluency and cultural integration
- Require supplementary work, especially in English
- May or may not provide requirements for higher level education (high school or college)
- Education in local schools at the secondary level will result in a strong cultural bias toward the host country. Boy-girl friendships are likely to be formed, and the basis for adult life within the host country will be established.
- Education may be linked with the national religion or popular religious practice.
- Curriculum and quality of academic instruction varies.
- Philosophy of instruction and disciplinary methods reflect cultural values.
- Learning by rote may be practiced rather than a deductive process.
- Content may be emphasized rather than creativity.
- More than one or two years required to achieve academic competency, comfort, and fluency in a new language
- May wish to have a child attend a national pre-school and/or a limited time each day while continuing home study in the mother tongue
- Generally not advisable to begin a child in a second-language school situation after the age of 11 or 12
- May be advisable to have child repeat a year of school in the second language if entry is in elementary years
- Non-academic courses or activities may be combined with home schooling to provide necessary academic training.

For more information, see:

“My Child in the National Schools” by Cynthia Storrs, *Interact*, February 1997.

“Notes on Using National Schools,” *Parents Teaching Overseas*, April 1992

### ***Mission Schools or International Christian Schools***

- May be run by one mission or cooperatively by several missions
- Student mix varies; may be majority of missionary kids
- Curriculum is often American; options may be provided to fulfill requirements of other countries
- May require boarding
- May be located across an international border
- Provides caring teachers with Christian world view
- Limited identification with national culture
- Large schools may provide instruction or mentorship in special ability areas.
- May provide “halfway steps” in cultural adjustment to passport country

### ***Boarding School***

Boarding is most often tied with the use of mission schools or international Christian schools. See Chapters 47–50 for discussions of what parents need to keep in mind when considering sending their children to boarding school.

### ***Secular International Schools***

- Curriculum: often American, sometimes International Baccalaureate, U.K. or European
- Usually extremely expensive, unless an exchange can be worked out by providing a teacher
- Develops strength for standing firm in the faith and becoming “salt and light” in the world

- Many students come from wealthy national families or highly paid expatriate families.
- May place children in a radically different level of society than where missionary parents are working
- Does not enhance strong identification with the local culture

For more information, see “Strategies for Dealing with Crisis in Missionary Kid Education” by David C. Pollock, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1989.

### ***Helpful Periodicals***

There are two periodicals which are of particular interest to families doing home teaching or wishing to be closely involved in their children’s education:

***Parents Teaching Overseas*** is a monthly newsletter published by CHED Family Services of Wycliffe Bible Translators, U.S.A. It is available for \$10.00 a year in the U.S. and \$18.00 a year to foreign addresses. Write to 7500 W. Camp Wisdom Road, Dallas, TX 75236-5899.

As its name indicates, *PTO* is designed for parents who are doing home teaching. However, it contains many very practical tips on educating children in non-classroom settings relevant to all missionary families.

***Interact*** is published quarterly in February, May, October, and December by Interaction, Inc. Subscription rate is \$14.95 per year. Write to *Interact*, P.O. Box 863, Wheaton, IL 60189.

*Interact* publishes articles about a broad range of educational and developmental topics, including adaptation and emotional issues. It is the primary regular source of new thinking in the field of MK education and care. It also contains announcements of conferences and events.

A third publication is of interest to a broad audience of Christian educators and parents:

***ACSI World Report*** is geared toward school staff and administration, but many of its articles are also of interest to parents who take an active interest in their children’s education. Its intended audience is not

limited to people who work with MKs, but includes Christian educators both in the U.S. and overseas.

For current information regarding subscriptions and frequency of publication, contact ACSI International Ministries, P.O. Box 35097, Colorado Springs, CO 80935-3509.

## **29.** ***Making Informed Decisions***

**Joyce M. Bowers**

Not all schools of a given type are the same, nor are they the same from one year to the next. As missionary parents, you need openness and flexibility, as you may change a decision once you are close to the situation and see how your child reacts. At the same time, try not to be too quick to take a child out of a situation that is initially difficult, but may be OK with time. Such decisions may require the wisdom of Solomon!

At every stage, realize that you will not be able to do everything you would like—life is not like that—but the more you have thought through what you want, the more you are able to make good use of unexpected opportunities. Example: if you have chosen what magazines you would like your children to receive, when someone asks you, “What can we do to help?” you can say, “It would be great if you would subscribe to a magazine for Mary. I’ll send you the address.”

There is no perfect choice; all choices have pros and cons. As Sharon Haag says, “What a comfort to know God promises us wisdom but doesn’t expect of us perfection. God is able to take both good and bad decisions and use them to help us grow as a family so we may also more effectively serve God as a family” (*Parents Teaching Overseas*, June 1996).

Evaluate relative merits. The best choice for someone else may not be the best choice for your family. The presence of friends at a school will make your child’s adjustment easier, and that may make up for other deficiencies. Within your family, the best choice for one child is not best for another, and what is right for a child at one age may not be right at another stage.

The following are things to consider at each stage of mission service:

***Pre-Field Process***

- Get as much information as possible about available options in your location overseas. Good sources of information include mission board personnel, recently returned missionaries, and current missionaries from your mission or another group.
- Write to schools for current information.
- Attend a Pre-field Educational workshop sponsored by Interaction and ACSI if possible. This workshop gives comprehensive information and guidance to parents and is especially important if your child will be home taught or enrolled in a national school.
- Get the SHARE resource book.
- Think through needs of children and desires of parents, using the lists below as a guide.
- Consider the needs of each child as an individual, each parent as an individual, and the family as a whole. Are you as parents equipped by training or temperament to teach your children if needed?

***On-Field Process***

- Check out options and information you were given. Things change very quickly, and the information you were given may not be accurate. Administration and teaching staff come and go, and a school which was excellent a few years ago may now be understaffed and struggling, or vice versa.
- Visit schools, with a translator if necessary. Find out about the style of instruction, the type of discipline, and class size.
- Talk to other parents, or people who have lived there for some time.
- Revise your educational plan, taking into consideration new information, new insight, and first-hand knowledge of your ministry and living situation.
- Try to maintain a balance between long-range planning and adaptation to unforeseen needs and situations.

***Home Assignment or Post-Service***

- Have children tested or evaluated to see if they are at a normal grade in basic skills if that service was not available overseas.
- Consult available advisors: persons provided by your mission, or informal contacts such as friends, family, or members of supporting churches who are educators.
- The local public school system may be your best source of assistance for special needs.
- Determine what is needed to fill in gaps so that your child can progress to next stage of education or development; e.g., remedial math, remedial English, sports activities, socialization.

***Factors in Decision Making***

There are many factors to take into consideration in making educational decisions. They include the child's personality, learning style, innate intellectual ability, and age in coming to the mission field.

Another set of considerations is the type of ministry in which the parents are engaged, personal or family preferences for schooling, and the necessity for acquisition of basic language and cultural tools necessary for surviving in a new place.

It is important to balance of needs of the child as an individual with the needs of the whole family unit in ministry.

It is best to have an educational plan for each child. While it is unlikely that you will be able to follow the plan exactly, having your priorities in mind helps when evaluating available options. You should also determine what standards will apply when considering a change, should your first choice prove to be unsatisfactory.

Consider your long-range goals for the future—in five or ten years, at age 18, or when you expect your son or daughter to enter college or live independently.

There are many different values which parents may consider important in their children's education. Some of these are mutually exclusive. In the February/March 1996 issue of *World Report*, David Wilcox listed many values which missionary parents may hold. The list below is adap-

ted from Wilcox's suggestions. Parents should consider and prioritize these values, along with others which may not be listed. "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else."

- Child's ability to communicate, interact, and function effectively in the host culture
- Child's fluency in the national or local language
- Functioning academically at the same level as age peers in home (passport) culture
- Similar quality of education as children in home country in terms of technology, materials, and resources
- Children identify parents' home culture as their home culture
- Opportunity for advanced course work
- At least one parent has significant day-time hours to assist children educationally
- Both father and mother involved in home schooling
- Confidence of parent's ability to educate with minimal professional assistance
- Christian peers for the child
- Availability of special education facilities and specialists
- Comprehensive, multi-track curriculum (college track, general track, industrial track)
- Costs of education and need to use personal funds
- Save money to finance higher education
- Opportunities to participate in music, performing arts, extra-curricular activities, athletics

In the June 1996 issue of *Parents Teaching Overseas*, Sharon Haag reported more values and goals which parents have listed.

- make good academic progress, to extent of the child's abilities
- develop independent study skills, lifelong learning skills
- develop competence and ethics in use of technology
- develop in areas of giftedness
- be prepared for higher education institutions of choice
- be able to work under authorities who don't share the same values
- be able to work in groups (i.e., leadership skills and teamwork)

- develop good work habits and independent living skills for passport country
- be emotionally mature and stable; be resilient
- take advantage of unique host-country learning opportunities
- make national friends, learn host-country language, develop culture adaptation skills
- value host culture
- value passport country and culture
- have strong ties to people and places in passport country
- have a positive sense of identity (e.g., as MK, as citizen of passport country, as Christian)
- hold strong Christian values
- learn to be "salt and light" in host country or passport country
- develop strong family relationships (including extended family)
- have good relationships with other Christians
- use personal gifts in service or ministry to the Body
- trust God in personal hardship; display perseverance

### ***Balancing Family and Individual Needs***

The needs of the family and individuals in the family are all important. Some people see the call to ministry as the overriding issue in missionary service. Others see that a ministry that does not allow time for taking care of the needs of family is flawed. Probably most people are somewhere in between on this issue.

It is important to stay focused on ministry with the family that God has called. This means that children understand why their parents are living overseas and how the Lord is using them to reach people. It means that parents love and cherish the children God has given them and see that they live healthy lives in conditions that are sometimes very unhealthful. It calls for a sense of balance and common sense that does not talk about family *or* ministry, but rather focuses on how God may bless each member of the family in their walk with God.

Giving attention to family needs means that a family does not serve where reasonable educational choices are not available for each child in

the family. Neither adults nor children are expected to live at “super-human” levels to meet the expectations of ministry in the light of practicalities of daily living. Such conditions can only produce excessive stress which has a high likelihood of leading to crises which ultimately damages the ministry, the family, and individuals in the family.

(This section was adapted from “What Are the Key Dynamics in Making Educational Decisions?” by David F. Brooks, *Interact*, February 1996.)

### 30.

## ***Transcultural Education: A Model for Expatriates***

**Brian V. Hill**

At ICMK Manila, I presented a model of expatriate education which argued that four elements were necessary to the education of the child of missionaries. The first was induction in the *Parental Culture*. No one disputes *this* requirement; it is obviously foundational. If anything, the problem is to justify including anything else!

The second element was exploration of the *Indigenous Culture*, i.e., the culture of the people amongst whom the missionary’s family was living. This is a part of missionary children’s world, and they should be helped to reflect on it.

But even *this* would not guarantee that the individual would be able to rise above cultural imperialism. So there was a further priority: to develop a respect for the inherent validity of each culture as a form of life from which children could draw enrichment. This puts an intrinsic value on *Multiculturalism* as the preferred alternative to narrow ethnocentrism.

To prevent the student from developing an attitude of cultural relativism in which there were no fixed points, a fourth element was called for, namely, a *Transcultural perspective*. This required studies which looked at culture itself, and increased the student’s awareness of how acculturation occurs, *including* acculturation of Christian beliefs and practices. It was a perspective which did not merely move *across* cultures but stood *above* them, developing an independent personal response.

The aim of transcultural education *in this sense* was to enable the individual to develop a view of reality which puts a spiritual roof over the whole, and made possible a truly personal and informed choice about the gospel invitation. It would be every parent’s prayer that this might lead to the emergence of an internationalist believer, someone capable of communicating across cultural barriers as well as other divisions between the races and the sects.

The present paper draws on this framework of elements to discuss contemporary realities which should influence the thinking of the multinational mission community about the education of their children.

### ***Some Contemporary Realities***

First, we must come to terms with some realities of today's world. Now "reality" is a slippery notion. The *physical* world maintains its shape for us fairly well, but *social* reality is shifting all the time.

The social reality in which my parents lived was more stable and parochial than that which my children inhabit. My parents were without television in their formative years, newspapers concentrated on local events, and "missionaries" were strangely restless people who left the comfort of home to convert the heathen in remote and barbaric lands. Let us consider some contemporary realities which have great significance for the education of the children of missionaries and other expatriates.

#### ***Transient status***

First, the status of missionaries in a country of placement is almost always transient. Most missionaries retain their home country citizenship by choice. *Some* missionaries adopt practices which unconsciously minimize their real commitment to the local people. They may prefer residence in a missionary compound and relate to local people in a way which makes locals feel like needy clients rather than equal brothers and sisters.

Children of missionaries become even more aware of transient status when they are sent away to another country for schooling. In the home, some children hear constant approving references to the parental culture, and *disapproving* and *patronizing* references to the local culture. There is a reluctance on the part of some missionaries to let their children attend local schools or learn about local traditions.

Transient status bites deep. It can produce psychological insecurity and depression. It can cause people to develop a tough exterior which hampers intimacy with others. And the children of missionaries in turn can become independent and self-contained, reluctant to reveal their feelings to others or to invest in close relationships.

### ***Multicultural context***

The second social reality is equally obvious: missionaries today work in a multicultural context. Their own presence there is enough to make it so, but there has also been a massive global mingling of ethnic and religious groups.

#### ***(a) In the larger society***

Even where the local population may be ethnically homogeneous, people are becoming more resistant to an evangelistic approach which says: "This is the truth, ignore all suggestions to the contrary and believe it." Today, even in quite remote villages, people are becoming aware that there are alternative views of the world, and that much of what was offered to them in past times in the name of Christ came with a Westernization price-tag. They are now learning to recognize cases of cultural imperialism and economic rape.

No longer can we shrug off the reality and the validity of other cultures. If the gospel is to prove its superiority, it must do so by acknowledging the good things in local lifestyles, while offering the people a keystone that they lack.

#### ***(b) In the missionary society***

The reality of multiculturalism also applies to the composition of the missionary community itself. Missionaries come from many countries, the more recently evangelized areas as well as the long Christianized ones.

It is necessary to recall that God baptized multiculturalism at the very birth of the church. Pentecost sent the gospel to the ends of the earth, in multiple languages and multiple cultural vehicles. Though most religions have "sacred" languages such as Sanskrit, Hebrew, or Arabic, the Christian revelation can freely be translated into other languages.

Probably the soundest missionary societies today are those which are genuinely multinational. Multinational missionary societies are the hope of the church, and that hope rests on the shoulders of young internationalists who have had a fully transcultural education.

### ***Parents in the Hot Seat***

The third contemporary reality is the hot seat in which parents find themselves. Many people bemoan what they see to be a *weakening* of parental authority and control. At the same time, however, they find their children turning to them for advice about complicated life choices and financial support through their university education. In industrially advanced societies, children are dependent on their parents for longer than ever before, and they do not always like the position this puts them in.

There are paradoxes here. Parents may *feel* more powerless, but in some respects their power to control their children's lives has increased. Parents have a greater chance to *influence* their children by reason and persuasion; the difference between power and influence being that the first represents domination (however loving it may be) while the second invites the learner to become a responsible, choosing person.

Many parents undervalue the importance of the environment of love, discipline, and security which *they* are best fitted to create for the child. The reality is that few professionals can have as much time for the individual as parents can; few professionals can afford the emotional commitment to the child as a person which comes naturally to parents; and few professionals have access to the range of clues available to parents in offering guidance on future life choices. Parents remain the primary influences on children, with the serious responsibility which Scripture gives to parents to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

### ***The Relevance of the Incarnation***

The fourth contemporary reality is the relevance of the incarnation principle. God pioneered it. He took the very nature of a servant and became a true human being; he enjoyed grilled fish and got the dust of Galilee between his toes. This is still the hallmark of the most valid cross-cultural mission. God has taught us some hard lessons in this century, letting foreign missionaries be driven out of several countries so that indigenous Christians might come to the full flower of maturity and responsibility. Then, in many cases, he has re-opened doors for those

missionaries to return as servants and consultants to local churches. The principle of ministry through incarnation is a contemporary reality.

How much is this reflected in the learning experiences we desire for our children? Are we in tune with it if we try to insulate them from the local culture in their growing up? It is not without significance that the Christ-child was suckled in Egypt and served his apprenticeship in the frontier town of Nazareth. With a good home life, many things are possible.

### ***The Construction of My Child's Reality***

This prompts a consideration of the construction of a child's reality. Human beings do not only live in a physical world, but build a representation of that world in their minds. This representation differs for each individual.

Human beings need an adequate world view, one which gives meaning to *all* of life, to remain healthy. The gospel of Christ is all about meaning and destiny. It provides a world view which fits *all* the facts and positions the sovereign God at the center. It also positions the rest of our social experience in proper relation to that center. The Christian perspective is not merely concerned with heaven or individual salvation, but with the transformation of the *Now*.

### ***The agonizing question: what is best for my child?***

All this reflects very directly on the question of how we should raise our children. The question is particularly agonizing for missionary parents. They look at the wholly different culture in which they have been called to serve, and their instinct is to say: how can I protect my child from this? They sometimes forget that its differentness is partly a function of the fact that the missionaries' own acculturation took place in another culture, whereas their children may not find it nearly so threatening. The children's natural adjustment is to a multicultural context in which the family and the wider environment provide different inputs. Children are often better than their parents at integrating.

But the question of what is best for my child is still an agonizing one, especially in cases where educational standards in local schools fall woefully short of international comparisons. Guilt feelings can distort parents' evaluation of the options, because they may feel that they have

disadvantaged their children in advance by obliging them to grow up in a disadvantaged culture. To compensate, they may feel that they have to send them away from the home circle to an enclave school where they can get “a good education.” But that is not a decision to be taken lightly. It puts a burden of surrogate parenthood on school personnel which they are not well equipped to bear.

#### ***The unreflective answer: parental culture***

But even if parents do not send children away, they may decide that the solution is to spin a cocoon in which the home culture has exclusive reign. Our model called it the *parental* culture, because it will not be the *home* culture of children born in the country of placement. Parents who want their children to be clones of themselves, even clones in Christian faith, are denying their children’s right and responsibility before God to become *themselves*.

Culturally, the children of missionaries and other expatriates have a foot in two camps, and their education must include guided studies of both. That is why our model calls for studies of the indigenous culture as well as the parental culture, along with the encouragement of a commitment to the value of multiculturalism.

#### ***The construction of realities***

Such advice is not going to appeal to those parents who think that their home culture is vastly superior to all other cultures, or to those who uncritically endorse the view that schooling is the key to education. But the realities which such people have constructed for themselves are not in tune with contemporary life. Let us examine these two assumptions in detail.

##### *(a) My child is disadvantaged*

First, many missionaries assume that their children are disadvantaged because they are not growing up in the home culture. This is not a *fact*, but an *interpretation*. It is the construction of a reality which may then affect the way the child perceives life in the mission field.

It was exciting to read the responses of many missionary parents when asked to consider their children in a questionnaire item, “What do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages of being the children of missionaries?” Some responses were:

- “Their sense of values is diverted from materialism to people-centered values.”
- “They have seen first hand God’s power working through the lives of people who otherwise would not have heard the gospel.”
- “They grow up accepting people of other races...Their minds are more creative — they have had to learn to entertain themselves.”
- “They have an opportunity to see the world-wide Body of Christ expressed visibly and locally...A sense of being a world citizen.”

There were, of course, references to the risks in of disease, physical danger, and persecution in some countries, and there were testimonies to the sense of rootlessness which can be brought on by frequent changes of assignment. But the most important insight to be derived from reading these frank testimonies was that a great deal hinges on the way in which missionaries *construct* the reality of their situation for themselves and their children. In any culture, at any time, there are advantages and disadvantages. By far the majority of the seventy-five parents responding to the questionnaire felt strongly that the advantages of being a “missionary kid” clearly out weighed the disadvantages.

Why then did they exhibit such anxiety about being able to fit smoothly back into the home culture? There were plenty of criticisms of the home culture for its materialism, competitiveness, selfishness, and lust. Yet a paramount educational objective for many parents was for their children to go back into that system. It was disappointing to detect this internal contradiction in the responses.

Missionary families are breeding grounds for potential Christian internationalists, “citizens of the world,” as one parent put it. What a resource! What valuable people to have in Christian strategy meetings, able to interact with vision and easy fellowship among Christians from other cultures; culturally liberated, ambassadors of a gospel for all cultures.

##### *(b) Schooling is the key*

The other social construction we must examine critically is the view that *schooling* is the key to education. This is dangerous, because although many things can be achieved by schooling, it is nevertheless a very blunt social instrument. In the promotion of individual learning it is

very inefficient and time-wasting. It is addicted to *compulsory* strategies—in maintaining social control, presenting core curriculum, and conducting formal assessment. These things foster alienation and discourage personal discovery. *Christian* schools run the additional risk of substituting the goal of behavioral conformity to the Christian way for free personal commitment.

Remember that only in the last 200 years have societies adopted the school as a universal strategy for education. Before that, people learned through home nurture and example, through apprenticeships, through private study and travel, and through friendships and voluntary group living. The chief value of schools, and the reason why universal schooling *is* necessary in the present day, is that schools are best able to marshal the resources needed to initiate students into that complex technological and pluralistic reality which is contemporary society. But schools need to be seen as only *one* important strategy among several in the education of the young.

Even churches tend to be over-addicted to the schooling paradigm as the best way to educate, despite the fact that formal schools are not mentioned *at all* in the Bible. All the educational and nurturing objectives spelled out in Scripture are remitted to educational agencies of other kinds. Paramount is the family circle, with many opportunities for informal learning through parental example and “as you walk along the road.”

Another learning environment is the Christian congregation, each one teaching the other as they share the Christian life together. And the one-to-one discipleship model is seen throughout the Scriptures.

Why do we assume that we need all the years from K to 12 to prepare our children for higher education? Only the last two years at most need focus on national requirements, leaving us free in the other ten or eleven to fashion the education of our choice.

What are our children learning from us when we push so hard for them to conform to the requirements of the educational establishment in our home country? The reality we are constructing for them owes more to our cultural conditioning than to a biblical perspective. That is where the need for a transcultural perspective comes in.

## *The Transcultural Perspective Revisited*

### *What it is not*

At this point it is specially needful to clarify the sense in which the term “transcultural” is being used here. It is not merely “cross-cultural” education. Two inadequate interpretations must be guarded against.

#### *(a) Learning about two cultures*

One is the view that all that is required is to learn about a second culture as well as the parental culture. Our model calls for study of the indigenous culture as well as the parental culture. But this could result in an individual whose ethnocentric view of the world had been *reinforced*, because the second culture always came off second best in comparison with the parental culture.

There are two problems with shaping the child's reality in this way: first, an uncritical confidence in the superiority of the parental culture would not be Christian, because *all* cultures fall short. Secondly, the child would be prevented from reaping benefit from the good things in the second culture. That is why *multiculturalism* is promoted as a value.

A genuine exposure to at least two cultures *can* be the first step on the road to a *transcultural* education, because it undermines the assumption that there is only one way to see the world. But more is needed.

#### *(b) Obtaining an international common core*

The second thing that transcultural education is *not*, is learning an international common core. Some approaches to transcultural education suggest that it may be possible to identify a set of common learnings in the major disciplines which can be presented to all students, alongside of studies more specific to their parental and indigenous cultures. This is a good thing to attempt. Enough is known about curriculum design and mastery learning to develop some credible syllabuses and standards.

This is a good move, but it is not necessarily transcultural education. It is *cross-cultural*, in a sense different from the previous two-cultures policy, but it may not be *trans-cultural*. For one thing, the very idea of packaging knowledge in separate academic disciplines is a distinctively

Western way of structuring reality. It is not necessarily a neutral policy, or a Christian one.

Secondly, few Western schools invite their students to question the validity of what is taught them in the core subjects. This material is usually treated as fact, which is cultural dogmatism. If the *critical* dimension is missing, then it is *not* transcultural education.

### ***What it is***

So then, what *is* transcultural education? It is an education which enables individuals to *transcend* their own cultural conditioning, to the extent that they achieve a level of informed and sensitized objectivity towards it which maximizes their ability a) to construct their own social reality, b) to make their own well-considered choices about what to believe and how to behave, and c) to accept full personal responsibility for those choices.

Some Christians fear that children raised to this level of self-awareness may choose to move away from their parents' faith. But it is the whole point of our earthly apprenticeship to take personal responsibility for this very choice.

Christ himself demanded it of those who sought to follow him. The New Testament witnesses to the fact that because Jesus was so insistent on personal autonomy at this level, many "turned back and no longer followed him." If we prefer to keep our children in conditioned conformity, then we have substituted possessiveness for love.

Like the people of Christ's time, we live in a pluralistic society. Some missionaries know so little about the world views and values of the people they are seeking to evangelize that all they can communicate is a stereotyped gospel message overlaid with cultural biases of which they are unaware. Transcultural education is essential for the missionary of today and tomorrow.

### ***How it can be achieved***

How is it to be achieved? One answer is to give priority to those areas of study which assist individuals to understand the cultural influences they have come under, and to develop a capacity for the

independent critical evaluation of belief claims and value systems, *including Christianity itself*.

This suggests, for example, that studies of human culture, such as literature, history, the arts, religious studies, geography, economics, and politics, should include segments of study which examine culture as such, and the ways in which ethnic groups construct their social reality. Methods for developing this kind of transcultural critique may be borrowed from such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and comparative religion.

Secondly, the teaching of all subjects should include times when the models of explanation used in those subjects are studied in their own right. In the teaching of science, for example, some attention should be given to the history of science, illustrating the importance of abstract models in guiding research, and the differences between theory and fact.

Thirdly, the Bible should be taught not just as unquestionable truth, but as a reasonable appeal to the thinking person, so that the assent of learners is gained by teaching them to study the meaning the text had for its original hearers, to consider how its truth is to be applied to contemporary realities, and to compare evidences for its reliability with claims made on behalf of scriptures that are cherished by other religions. The Bible is the pre-eminent source of a transcendent perspective on all cultures.

### ***Making Transcultural Education A Reality***

Our last task is to identify some of the factors to be taken into account in making transcultural education a practical reality.

#### ***The time variable***

First, we must not be intimidated by the time factor. It matters not at all if, in order to meet the higher objectives of both multicultural and transcultural study, it proves difficult to bring an expatriate child to the stage of completing school requirements by the age of eighteen. Parents should be prepared, if necessary, to put their post-school children into a junior college or further education center in the home country for a year or two, to undertake the make-up studies which will enable them to obtain a good placement in an institution of higher education, if that is what they want. Far better to do this than to mortgage all the years of

schooling to such a distant objective, at the cost of dislocation to the stable domestic relationship they need.

#### ***The content variable***

Secondly, it bears repeating that the aim of developing a transcultural perspective is not subject-specific. It can be fulfilled through the teaching of many different bodies of content. It can be achieved in the study of history, for example, though that history may be the history of France, or Africa, or New Guinea, or whatever.

Therein also, of course, lies the danger. Since transcultural education is not subject-specific (though I would always want to see biblical studies included), there is a risk that it will disappear down the cracks. A teacher given a geography syllabus may easily slip into an authoritarian mode of teaching, overlooking the potential of that subject to encourage transcultural awareness and independent thought.

There is a need to write specific objectives and to identify teaching methods which will contribute particularly to the realization of this aim, and then to provide in-service training and supervision for teachers so that they will actually implement them. Traditional teaching usually falls below these requirements, because *teachers themselves* have rarely been encouraged to develop a transcultural perspective. If the only available teachers are inexperienced ones who have not mastered basic classroom skills in a familiar environment, they will need careful briefing and supervised internship.

#### ***Alternative study modes***

Alternative modes of study should be considered. The school classroom is rarely used to get much beyond information transfer. There are other ways of studying, particularly for the older student who can work more independently.

Learning also occurs through *praxis*, that is, an initial act of reflection, followed by some form of practical action or implementation, on which one then reflects further, leading to modified action, and so on.

This is particularly relevant to inter-cultural communication and to acts of service.

#### ***Assessment and accreditation***

Fourthly, there is the question of assessment and accreditation. We are far too intimidated by the accreditation requirements of our home countries. There are many ways in which home country requirements can be met while providing a curriculum which is genuinely multicultural and transcultural in effect, and missionary administrators should expand their horizons in this regard. In any case, the educational assessment that really matters is that which occurs within each school, where the child is known.

#### ***An International Institute for Curriculum Development***

Fifthly and lastly, an adequate understanding of contemporary realities requires global dialogue. An International Institute for Curriculum Development should be developed, dedicated to drawing on existing syllabuses and resources to create outlines and materials which foster all four of the cultural elements I have identified.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, we have explored two main theses. First, transcultural education is not just *cross-cultural* education, but a style of learning which enables one to transcend one's own cultural conditioning and respond to God in a truly autonomous way. This is an appropriate and Christian goal for the education of all children, but especially for the children of missionaries and other expatriates. Why for the latter? Because we have here a most exciting potential resource for the kingdom of God. Expatriates have the potential to become world citizens, rising above the parochialism of their parents, because they have been educated in a multicultural milieu and equipped with a level of awareness which enables them to disentangle the eternal good news from the mores of all the cultures they encounter.

Abridged, with minor editing, by permission from *Journal of Christian Education* (Australia), April 1992.

## 31.

### *Foundation Stones of Transcultural Education*

#### Ollie Gibbs

##### *An Introduction to “Foundation Work”*

Over the years, as I have watched Christian ministries in the United States and around the world, I have been fascinated with one thing in particular. Concern with the visible, with the superstructure, often means the foundation has been forgotten.

When Solomon was given the phenomenal task of building God’s temple of surpassing beauty, he first considered the foundation, the quality, the hard stone, the hewed stone which went into God’s building. Here are three foundation stones for biblical transcultural education.

The starting point is this: *A philosophy of education from a Christian perspective is based upon the authority, the authenticity, and the reliability of the Bible as the complete and final revelation of God concerning all matters of faith, truth, and practice.* It is upon that Scripture that I build the foundations for transcultural education.

##### *Stone One: The Universal Nature of the Gospel*

In addition to the fact that Jesus Christ came to save all humankind, another element needs to be looked at in considering this topic. The universal nature of the gospel message is a *transplatable lifestyle* that is the result of the gospel message of Christ.

The transplatable lifestyle should be part and parcel of the educational program. For example, we tend to rank certain races as superior or inferior or more important than others. Yet Jesus never classified races. There was no respecting of persons; all races were treated equally. That transplatable lifestyle is the result of the universal nature of the gospel. Sometimes we focus so much on salvation we totally miss the teachings—by way of direct teaching or by example—that our Lord was communicating to us regarding this transplatable lifestyle. Since this has not been articulated well it has produced cultural isolationism.

One of the best ways to communicate this transplatable lifestyle is through curriculum. There needs to be a way to ensure that this universal nature of the gospel message reaches home in the curriculum—both in the hidden and the written curriculum. Written curriculum is what is put down on paper, which we are used to working with. Hidden curriculum is taught by example or practice within the school and not necessarily written.

In the development of curriculum, there are three basic sources:

- the subject matter itself—what is typically taught in the field;
- the society from which we operate; and
- the needs of the particular student.

As these three sources are balanced in light of their generalities and their particularism, we put together some tentative objectives. They are tentative only because they must be filtered through our philosophy of education and our psychology of human development—what we believe about those children we teach and what we believe about why we are teaching—to form general objectives.

From that point on, we move to determining:

- what learning experiences to place before the children,
- how to organize those experiences,
- how to implement those experiences,
- how to evaluate those experiences.

As the biblical foundation block interacts with each component of this particular model, the universal nature of the gospel permeates the curriculum that is placed before our children.

In working through the curriculum, general objectives can be formed that reflect the universal nature of the gospel of Christ. This task demands a good understanding of the subject area and the people around us, as well as a good understanding of the Word of God, in order to reflect the universal nature of the gospel in the educational process.

##### *Stone Two: A Global Frame of Reference*

The American cartoon character Pogo was in the midst of battle and it didn’t look like Pogo had much of a chance at all. As he stood there with all of the troops around him, he exclaimed, “We are in the midst of

insurmountable opportunities!” That’s an interesting perspective. *We are in the midst of insurmountable opportunities.*

The development of a global frame of reference is a Christian world view that strives to make the well-being of all people a primary value. To have a global frame of reference requires that our educational process be developed in light of the world as a multicultural entity. While there is a common humanity, there are genuinely different ways of thinking, speaking, and valuing. It is a challenge for parents to communicate to children that just because other people do it different that does not mean it is wrong.

For instance, consider the whole matter of schooling. We could move to any part of the world and find a schooling process, but the schooling process differs greatly from one part of the world to another. It is a frame of reference that is global in scope, but it is uniquely different and valued differently from culture to culture.

Another example of the complexity in developing a transcultural education that is global in scope can be seen by looking at one of the Ten Commandments. We are to honor our father and mother. The way in which that honor was practiced in biblical times is certainly different from the way in which it is practiced today. And the way in which honor is practiced today differs from culture to culture, in such things as age of children, lifestyles of children, and taking care of the elderly. So something that seems as simple as one of God’s commandments to honor your parents becomes highly complex within different cultures.

Biblical moral directives have to be treated with very careful consideration, because on one hand they are dealing with cultural relativities and on the other hand they are dealing with spiritual universalities. That is what is meant by global frame of reference: factors of cultural relativity on one hand and spiritual universality on the other hand. *A global frame of reference is necessary to the development of a biblical transcultural philosophy of education.* Each person and all cultures can learn from and contribute to each other. It is imperative that we become not only listeners to, but learners from, all people: people who sometimes we think are strange, inferior, and even as our enemies. Without global perspective, we will not reflect the universality of the gospel message.

### ***Stone Three: Global Understanding and Particularism***

Curriculum is a pathway. The root word from which the term *curriculum* comes means to run a race, to run a course, to be a part of a path, to go somewhere. The curriculum can represent a multitude of priorities: the priorities of the institution, of the supporting mission, a disciplinary point of view, or any number of other issues. A biblical, transcultural philosophy of education is not bounded by any of those particular issues; it transcends them.

Sometimes schooling is treated as an attempt to give all information on all subjects to our children. We eventually come to the point where everything becomes essential. It starts snowballing and eventually nothing is accomplished because we cannot teach everything to all of our children. That is what is meant by a *global frame of reference in tension with content particularism.*

Look at teaching history for example. It is impossible to teach the history of all of our countries and all time periods to our students. So what do we do? We make selections on what to emphasize. That is content particularism. But is that content particularism in light of a global frame of reference? No. They are arbitrary choices. Let me give some possibilities of teaching it from that perspective.

I think we could assume that all cultures of all times have experienced political and leadership changes. It is a commonality, part of a global frame of reference common to all cultures and nationalities.

All cultures at one time or another have experienced war. They have all experienced economic difficulties. They have all developed treaties or some types of relationships to maintain peace. There is a global frame of reference. The development of a transcultural biblical education is to identify the global frame of reference within the content areas.

Then there is the matter of content particularism. There are always content choices that must be made. There are certain areas of history that must be prioritized. They are part and parcel of all the knowledge, but they are tied together by the global frame of reference.

In the process of putting together curriculum, consider that we only have children so much time during a day, a week, or a year. We struggle with what to include and what not to include within the academic area.

Then we struggle with other areas as to how much time they get. That is the tension. We must make those hard choices within the global frame of reference that reflects the universal nature of the message of God. That is what is meant by *biblical, transcultural education*.

### ***The Apostle Paul as a Model***

The work of the apostle Paul illustrates the interaction between a global frame of reference and particular content. The ministry of the apostle Paul was to communicate the gospel of Christ to the world, and that permeates Paul's journeys and his writings. It is a true global frame of reference from which he operated. Now consider the book of 1 Timothy. Paul gave Timothy all sorts of instruction on shepherding the local flock—content particularism. The global frame of reference was communicating the gospel to the world, but his content particularism was shepherding a local flock.

Take another example, the book of Romans, which is an apologetic. Different audience, different students, different time, different society, and the content particularism changed. The global frame of reference did not change. The content particularism dovetailed beautifully into the global frame of reference that embraced the universality of the gospel of Christ.

Much of schooling and curriculum today is very fragmented. It is totally at the whim of the person in charge: the teacher, the administrator, the mission board, and the supporting organization. In addition, the selections are often very limited. Because of that, I would like to suggest three challenges.

### ***Developing a Biblical, Transcultural Filter***

The way we teach and the way we administer our schools are reflections of our training and our experiences. If we do not filter properly, then we tend to do what we were taught. Issues of staff development, classroom management, residence program, school policy, and curriculum are all handled according to where we were before or the way we were taught, without reflection on what we are doing in light of a transcultural biblical philosophy. *We must put the filters in place.* I put

the transcultural filter first—those issues that characterize the transcultural mindset—to filter out of our thinking all that does not fit.

Then we allow the Word of God to filter out what is contrary in terms of the very abundance of our hearts, for it is out of the abundance of the heart that we speak and we operate. These two filters help us reflect ministries that are both transcultural and biblical in their perspective. The challenge before us is to consciously develop the filtering systems through reading, and discussion, and putting them into place in our own lives, activities, and schools.

### ***Balancing Open-Mindedness and Doctrine***

One of the greatest challenges facing modern Christianity is the separation of human traditions from God's directives. It is the separation of what people have said and what God has said. I think the two have become so intertwined that sometimes they become indistinguishable. Because we have mixed the two together, we are unable to develop a global frame of reference that reflects the universal nature of the gospel of Christ. We have become bounded by our own traditions, whether they are within our church, our organization, or our culture.

Developing a philosophy of biblical transcultural education requires that we recognize the great diversity that exists in God's people. We begin with the Word of God: it is the rule of practice for all that we do. It is authentic, it is inspired, it is reliable. The doctrines of the faith are unchallengeable, but there are great differences of opinion among the various teachers. If we do not seek to understand and recognize the differences, we will become isolationists in our educational programs because we are unwilling and unable to view the diversity God has created.

### ***Implementation***

The final challenge is implementing a biblical and transcultural philosophy of education. The task that stands before us is to take the steps necessary for our school programs—both written and hidden—to be reflective of the universal nature of the gospel message. To make our school curriculum—hidden and written—reflective of a global frame of

reference that is common to all people. To make our school curriculum—written and hidden—reflect a content particularism that is responsive to the needs of society around us and to the students to whom we minister in that host culture.

***The Challenge:***

- To implement within our respective content areas,  
our administrative roles, and our school as a broad entity,  
the universal nature of the gospel message.
- To have a global frame of reference with a content particularism  
that draws us together within the diversity  
and the uniqueness that God made.

It is a challenge. As Pogo said, *we are standing in the midst of insurmountable opportunities.*

Adapted with permission from *World Report*, April 1991.

**32.**

***Building a Conceptual Framework for Transcultural Education***

**Peter and Jan Blackwell**

**Peter:** My own education is an Australian one. I have spent the last twenty-five years in the United States administering a school for the deaf. The fact that it's a school for the deaf is only related to the nature of the institution rather than to the issue of curriculum. The questions of curriculum are the same kinds of issues that anyone deals with in the matter of school structure. Jan is principal of the Cranston Christian Academy, so in this presentation we will be sharing our experiences in struggling with aspects of curriculum at a very broad level.

There are great changes taking place in education in Europe. Great Britain, France, Scandinavia and the Netherlands are doing considerable thinking about the whole process of their educational programs. Japan and other Asian countries are going through similar experiences. Asia is changing rapidly in many ways. I recently participated in a seminar with twenty-five Japanese educators, and we found them struggling with many of the same issues, trying to meet the diversity of their population. They are aware that the Japanese educational system has primarily been focused on the needs of just one segment of their population.

In developing a curriculum that is transcultural, I believe we need the foundation of a conceptual curriculum. It is similar to the point that Ollie Gibbs (Chapter 31) makes for the global framework of knowledge. He suggests that rather than the specifics of a particular history being the goal of the curriculum, we should consider a large framework that has some universal concepts behind anyone's history. If I asked you what is the history of the United States, or Tasmania, or any other country we might refer to, we are inevitably tied to facts. We are either right or wrong; the facts are either there or they are not there. Students either know the information or they don't.

This factual approach to history and other subjects is the most common curriculum. However, when we are trying to meet the needs of

several nationalities, a factual curriculum does not work, or the school is faced with the problem of providing several factual curriculum outlines.

I can change my earlier question from “What is the history of the United States?” to a more general perspective or a conceptual question such as, “From what you know about history, what might be true of the history of the United States or Tasmania—or anyone’s history?” Then the answer is not a set of facts, but a set of ideas or concepts that can be applied generally to the history of nations.

- There may have been indigenous peoples there at an early time.
- They may have been conquered by other people.
- There may have been several conquests throughout its history.
- There were probably periods of war.
- The nature of government may have changed more than once throughout its history.
- There were most likely great leaders that emerged in its history.
- The history of the country has been preserved and honored in monuments, epics, songs, and art.

The essence of this approach to curriculum development is to help build in the student’s mind a construct of generalizations which can be brought to new information and to new situations.

To develop the conceptual framework, we need to have more than one set of information. To establish a general concept of history there should be at least three different histories, so that patterns of comparison and contrast can be defined. The classroom with several nationalities represented will, in fact, be a help to this kind of curriculum approach. The multiplicity of ethnic groups within the school is an advantage rather than a disadvantage. This recognition of the larger picture should cause us to be constantly examining the ethnocentric nature of the curriculum we are using.

For example, the food groups is a part of everybody’s curriculum. We learn about proteins and carbohydrates, and so on. In looking at my school’s curriculum recently that I realized that when studying this topic that under starches, we listed potatoes, rice, and bread. But while we studied many other cultures, we did not include the diets of these various

peoples that we had studied. All people need a balanced diet. That is a conceptual statement. Where do the Kang Gang peoples of the rain forest get their starch? Do the Inuit have starch in their diet? If there are countries of the world where there are deficiencies in the diet structure, then there are problems with health, and the implications of all of that are enormous. Is that a part of the curriculum?

Jan and I want to illustrate the conceptual curriculum. Jan will talk about Grade 1 and her experience in the development of the curriculum.

*Jan:* My role here is largely to speak as a teacher to other teachers. When I first came across the conceptual approach to teaching, the big question in my mind was, “How does one go about doing this?” I expect that you are asking that same question. I will share how I go about putting together a curriculum. My hope is that you will be encouraged to go back and do some of the same things.

#### ***Four Requirements***

I’d like to encourage you as teachers to consider four significant components if you’re going to utilize a conceptual approach to teaching. Firstly, ***you must be a learner yourself***. If you’re excited about a topic which you are researching and learning, and you impart that to students, they will be excited about it. Excitement is infectious.

Second, I would encourage you to ***be knowledgeable about resources in your area***. You need to consult libraries and contact your resource centers if they are available. You need to find out what other missionaries are good at and how can they contribute to the school program or to your curriculum. Local people are a wonderful resource. In my school, the best resources that I have had for comparing cultures have been people from other cultures: parents, students at local universities, people in the church. We have used them extensively, and it has been profitable for us as a school and for them as well.

Third, I would like to encourage you as teachers to ***be knowledgeable about the age group that you are teaching***. There is a tremendous amount of information available on the developing child, both at the elementary level and at the middle school level. There are organizations that specifically deal with middle school populations, how they are

unique, and how they are different from elementary and high school. We need to read that material.

Fourth, if you are going to jump into trying to prepare a conceptual curriculum, you need to *be prepared to take responsibility for the curriculum*. The conceptual approach does not come in a nice, neat package. You are going to come away with a lot of ideas and things to do. Peter and I are willing to share what has worked well for us. We can share the concepts, but you need to go back and take ownership for the curriculum. That will be your responsibility.

How do we get started? How do we go about developing a conceptual approach? I will share the way I am comfortable with, but is not the only way.

### **Conceptual Goals**

The very first thing is to set some *conceptual goals*. I like to think of these conceptual goals as a global frame of reference, because they are going to provide a framework for everything else that is taught. All the subject areas will be integrated within the framework of these conceptual goals, and the units will be organized accordingly. They must be first and foremost in your mind.

At the first grade level, we want to acquaint the children with how children and families live in other cultures. We have a set of concepts for our children to be familiar with by the end of the year. We want to be able to talk about a culture that they have not studied, think about that culture, and predict factors about that culture—without having studied it.

1. The world is made up of continents and countries.
2. People in different countries have distinct physical characteristics.
3. All people have the same basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and a sense of belonging, but people in different countries have different kinds of food, clothing, and shelter.
4. All people use language, but not all languages are the same.
5. Most people play, but games are different from country to country.

6. Most people have religious beliefs, but there are different beliefs and different ways to express those beliefs.

Having established this set of concepts, I think about units of study that will help teach them. The second concept, for instance, talks about different people having different characteristics. I might first choose an Asian culture to teach about. The next is possibly a Hispanic culture such as Mexico. The third might be an African culture. I have studied Nigeria in the past because I have several Nigerian families in my school.

This year, I may go back and study Kenya, having learned something about this culture. Last, every year at our school we include an ancient culture study, and we do the biblical literature along with that. For the first grade, our ancient culture happens to be Egypt, so we study the life of Moses.

This year I had a boy from Indonesia in my classroom. I knew nothing about Indonesia. But I thought it would be helpful and fun to study a culture that affirmed his cultural background and helped the other children in the class understand him. So I chose to study Indonesia. Another family had come from the Cape Verde Islands. Their daughter was in my class, and I knew nothing about the Cape Verde Islands either. But I thought it would be interesting to teach about their culture. I also had a little boy in my class whose father was from Africa, so my African culture was in place. And the last one was the biblical culture—Egypt and Moses. I chose those four.

In order for you to get a little better idea of the comparing and contrasting, and the integration of subject areas within the framework, it may be helpful to go through a yearly overview. I usually prepare these in the summer.

Having established the four units of study to be covered, I plan my first unit. It is the Asian unit, the family in Indonesia. The geography that is pertinent are the continents of the world, the islands of Indonesia, what an island is, and the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Social Studies will include what is it like to live in Indonesia, what people wear, what they eat, what kind of homes they live in, the games they play, and what language is used. In science, we did some observations of the properties

of matter (related to a science text), agriculture, plant properties, parts of plants, how plants change, and plant parts as food.

The yearly outline then is as follows:

The Child and Family in Other Societies: Conceptual Statements

1. The world is made up of continents and countries.
2. People in different countries have distinct physical characteristics.
3. All people have the same basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and a sense of belonging. People in different countries have different food, clothing, and shelter.
4. All people use language but not all languages are the same.
5. Most people play but games are different from country to country.
6. Most people have religious beliefs but there are different beliefs and different ways to express those beliefs.

## UNITS

An Asian Family in Indonesia

A Portuguese Family in the Cape Verde Islands

An African Family in Nigeria

An Ancient Egyptian Family

### UNIT ONE: AN ASIAN FAMILY IN INDONESIA

#### Geography:

The continents of the world

The islands of Indonesia

What is an island?

The Pacific and Indian Oceans

#### Social Studies:

What is it like to live in Indonesia?

What do the people wear?

What do the people eat?

What kind of homes do the people have?

What games do the people play?

What do the fathers, mothers, and children do?

What religion do the people have?

What languages are used and what games do the people play?

#### Science:

Observing and describing

What are some properties?

Sorting into groups

Indonesian agriculture

Plant properties

Parts of plants

How do plants change?

Looking inside a seed

Where can you find seed?

How do seeds travel?

Planting bulbs

#### Reading:

Big books and chart stories

Literature: Tales from Southeast Asia

*Why There Are No Tigers in Borneo*

*The Meeting Pool* (A collection of tales from Borneo)

Folk tales from Indonesia

#### Bible:

A book of proverbs for the family

We will learn Psalm 100

#### Project:

We will carve boats and float them around islands

We will make Indonesian flags

We will dress up in clothing from Indonesia

We will build an Indonesian home

#### Field Trip:

Lunch at an Indonesian restaurant

### UNIT TWO: A FAMILY IN THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

#### Geography:

The continent of Africa

The country of Portugal in Europe

The Cape Verde Islands

The Atlantic Ocean

**Social Studies:**

What is it like to live on the Cape Verde Islands?  
 Foods  
 Clothing  
 Homes  
 Religion  
 Work  
 Music, art, and games

**Bible:**

We will learn Psalm 8

**Science:**

Oceanography  
 Most of the Earth is oceans  
 Oceans are environments for living things

**Reading:**

*Seesaw and Merry-Go-Round*

**Literature:**

We will invite Len Cabral, a well known storyteller of Cape Verdian descent, to come to our school.  
 Folk Tales from the Cape Verde Islands by Len Cabral  
 (NHO Lobo #410 Yellow Moon Press)

**Music:**

Songs and chants from the Cape Verde Islands

**Projects:**

How clothes come from sheep  
 Weaving  
 We will build a Cape Verde home

**UNIT THREE: AN AFRICAN FAMILY IN NIGERIA****Geography:**

The continent of Africa and its many countries  
 The Atlantic Ocean

**Social Studies:**

What is it like to live in Nigeria?  
 Foods  
 Clothing  
 Homes

Arts and crafts

Religion, festivals, games, languages

**Science:**

The world is made up of living and nonliving things  
 There are many kinds of living things (people, plants and animals)  
 Living things exhibit basic similarities  
 Living things have basic needs (food, shelter, and coverings)  
 Living things change through time

**Bible:**

Psalm 117

**Reading and Literature:**

African folk tales  
 Anansi stories  
*Elephant Boy*  
*Why Do Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears?*  
 Bimwilli and the Zimwi  
*Moja Means One*  
*Congo Boy*  
*Ashanti to Zulu*  
*Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain*  
*I Am Eyes: Ni Macho*

**Projects:**

We will make African masks  
 We will build an African home  
 We will prepare some African meals  
 We will tie dye dashikis

**Field Trip:**

Rhode Island School of Design Museum—The African Art Exhibit

**UNIT FOUR: A FAMILY IN ANCIENT EGYPT****Geography:**

The Nile River  
 The Red Sea  
 The Sinai Desert  
 The Mediterranean Sea

**Social Studies:**

Ancient life in Egypt: homes, food, clothing and means of transportation

We will play Senet, an ancient Egyptian game

Roles in the Egyptian culture: farmers, hunters, fishermen, writers, painters

The power of the pharaoh in contrast to the powerless slave

Polytheism of the Egyptians, life after death concept, burial rites, mummies and the pyramids

Hieroglyphics

**Science:**

Motion, friction, force and simple machines (in the context of the building of the pyramids)

Irrigation along the Nile

**Bible:**

The Life of Moses

The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt

We will learn the five books of the Pentateuch

We will celebrate Passover

We will learn Psalm 136:1–16

**Reading:**

The Lyon Bible Stories on the life of Moses

Enid Blyton's series on Moses in Egypt

**Literature:**

*In Search of Tutankhamen*

*Pharaohs and Pyramids* (Time Traveler Books }

*The Pyramids* (David McCauley)

*Hieroglyphics for Fun*

*An Egyptian Town*

*Mummies Made in Egypt*

*Exodus* (Miriam Chaikin, Holiday House, NY)

**Projects:**

We will bury a Pharaoh

We will make bricks from straw and mud

We will write using hieroglyphics

**Field Trip:**

Rhode Island School of Design Museum, to see a real mummy

A reminder here is that although we have been studying these very interesting topics, the goal of the teaching is not merely to learn about Indonesia, Cape Verde, Nigeria, and Egypt. We want to understand that the people studied all have language, but the languages they speak are not the same; that they all have ways of celebrating or playing, but their celebrations and play differ from culture to culture. The real test, then, is if we were to put up some pictures of a group of people in Brazil, the children could make some predictions about the people without knowing even who they are or where they live. "They will speak a language. I wonder what language they speak?" "They probably will have a religion?" and so on.

We have found that the conceptual curriculum has adapted well to the educational goals reflected in the curriculum guidelines of Israel, Scandinavia, China, and the Netherlands, so we have no doubt that it can make a contribution to a transcultural approach to the multinational missionary school.

Based on a presentation made at ICMK Nairobi, November 1989.

### 33.

## *Nurturing Our Students' Native Languages*

**Anne-Christine Marttinen**

Contact, especially linguistic contact, is a basic human need. Linguistic contact is a key to the minds and behavior of other people. When using their native language people not only communicate words, but also emotions as well as the roots and culture of their people.

### *Language, Identity and Self-Esteem*

When a child arrives in a new country and is confronted by a new culture as well as a foreign language, he has to re-establish his personality in order to explain himself and to be accepted. This means that he has to communicate skills and knowledge as well as emotions.

Children benefit from learning several languages. Some experts say that a child can cope with three different languages without much difficulty. This is evident in bilingual homes where the child naturally speaks one language with his mother, another language with his father and perhaps a third language at school.

Children should be encouraged to speak the local language of the country where they reside, but not at the expense of their native tongue. The child needs solid support from parents and other adults who can help and encourage coping and interpretation of life in a new country. It is also the task of parents as well as teachers to prevent excessive stress and to help the child preserve his national identity, language, and culture. A strong sense of heritage and cultural identity gives the child a feeling of personal worth.

The self-esteem of the child depends on his or her ability to communicate in a meaningful way. When this ability is disturbed, the child becomes easily frustrated.

### *No English = No Intelligence*

Many non-English-speaking children have found themselves in frustrating situations both at school and in boarding homes. They have

been confronted with language imperialism. The school demands that the child learn the school language as fast as possible. Therefore the staff discourages the use of the child's native tongue. (Not long ago, the same thing applied to deaf children. They were physically punished if they used sign language instead of lip reading.) If the child is unable to use his or her native tongue, the result is being deprived of emotional outlets in situations when support is essential.

Too many parents trust the expertise of the school and its staff. Consequently, they do not rush to rescue their children and demand for them the right to use their native language. There have been cases where children have been pressured to stop using their own medium of communication by teachers who have threatened not to promote students to the next grade if they studied their own language. Children have also had to take foreign language intelligence tests which were then used to determine their grade placement in school.

It is not unusual for children to be ridiculed for deficient language skills. It is also true that many individuals harbor the shared illusion that a child is lacking in mental ability because of a lack in language ability. When a child does not have words for emotions, he or she tends to compensate by adopting acting-out behavior. This can lead to isolation, aggressiveness, and learning difficulties. The child reacts by developing symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, urinary infections, and bed-wetting, to mention only a few. Some children feel so put down by these attitudes that they bluntly refuse to learn the new language. Communicating in one's own tongue and compensating in sports or music are positive outlets for these emotions. They not only put the child at ease, but motivate to functioning in a new language.

### *Panicking Parents*

The worst thing that can happen to children in this situation is for their parents to abandon the use of their native language in order to help them quickly adapt to the language used in the new school or country. When people communicate in a foreign language, their vocabulary for endearment is limited, they use fewer physical signs, and are more limited in their expressions of emotions. If parents use a foreign language when they speak to their child, the relationship between parent and child

suffers. Parents should not panic, act shortsightedly, or abandon the use of their native language just to solve a temporary problem. Their children may have a thousand and one reasons for why it is not necessary for them to continue studying their native language. They may say, "We will never use it in the future," or "We will be studying overseas and not at home." Parents should preserve their common sense while listening to the gripes and complaints of the offspring. They should also remember that it is not always possible for them to provide expensive education in English-speaking countries in the future.

"International children" are not children who belong everywhere. They are children who know where they belong, but can easily cope and communicate in other languages and in other cultures.

### ***Suggestions***

Children need a rich language to analyze and understand their surroundings. The native tongue is emotionally charged because it relates to feelings and relationships in the speaker's own childhood. A good command of the native tongue is a necessary basis for learning other languages. Therefore, it is important that children are instructed in their native language while they study abroad. There are several possible ways to accomplish this. Students can 1) attend schools run in the native language, 2) attend international schools with national boarding homes, 3) attend international or local schools and receive extra tutoring in the native language, 4) take special courses in their native language, correspondence courses, literature, and so on, 5) spend long enough periods of time during furloughs in schools in their home country to promote language learning, and 6) have cultural briefings to be combined with each of these options.

Whatever alternative or combination of alternatives is chosen, the parents and teachers should be aware of the pros and cons of their choice. They must understand how each alternative affects the student's ability to pursue further studies either in their home country or abroad. They should also remember that the person assigned to tutor them in their native language is a very important person. The tutor can easily become a psychological fuse, an information person, a friend, an entertainer, a garbage bin, a voice and counselor to the student.

### ***On Returning Home***

When the child returns to his home country, he is once again forced to adapt. There is strong pressure on him for achievement. The child is older now with a greater need and desire to communicate verbally. Moreover, people expect fluency in his own language. If knowledge of the native language is insufficient, the adaptation process proves more frustrating than necessary. All lessons in school turn out to be language lessons and the child fails to achieve according to mental ability. A child may be described as less gifted, arrogant or grumpy, immature or hyperactive. The child develops inflated ideas about himself and his capabilities. If she has achieved well in her former school, the ridicule she receives is even more devastating. Some children hate school to the extent that they drop out.

Knowledge, common sense, good planning, patience and, above all, many supportive adults help to navigate youngsters through these periods of change to further studies and a meaningful life.

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## 34.

## *Learning the Rules or Learning the Language?*

**Marilyn Pool Andreasson**

In foreign language teaching, as in other areas of education, there is a gap between theory and practice which leads to confusion and misunderstanding when new ideas are introduced in the field. University researchers tend to spin their theories in a world of ideal students and classrooms, with little reference to the classroom realities teachers face on a day-to-day basis. Researchers, primarily concerned with the development of theory, often cloak their ideas in a language so obscure that only the initiated can understand the principles underlying their ideas. This makes it difficult for classroom teachers to evaluate and implement those ideas which often reach them in the form of what appears to be simply another fad in foreign language teaching.

### *Key Questions in Foreign Language Instruction*

The purpose of this article is to attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice by looking at a recent trend in foreign language education, broadly known as “communicative language teaching,” in terms of the theories on which it is based and some practical applications for the classroom teacher. Communicative language teaching, like all other approaches to foreign language teaching, proposes answers to two basic questions. What does it mean to know a language? What is the most effective way to teach a language? It is necessary to look at the way this approach answers those questions in order to evaluate its contribution to the needs of real students and teachers.

Communicative language teaching is the third major trend in foreign language teaching to appear in the twentieth century. In order to understand its assumptions about language learning, we will compare them to the assumptions made by other major approaches: grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods. All three language teaching approaches are based on the premise that in order to know a language, one must know its structure, or in the broadest sense of the term, its grammar.

### *The Grammar-Translation Approach*

This approach assumes that explicit teaching of the rules in English (or whatever is the mother tongue of the students) is the best way to learn the structure. Rules are presented, explained, and practiced. The syllabus moves from one grammar point to another. For example, in the first unit the regular present tense conjugations may be taught. In the second unit, the adjectives and one or two irregular verbs are introduced. In the third unit, question and negation forms are presented. Translation is used extensively both in instruction and to verify students’ progress. Bright and well-motivated students often achieve quite a high degree of knowledge of the rules of the language using this method.

However, as one of my best groups of advanced students pointed out to me, knowing the rules is not the same thing as knowing the language. They had mastered many rules but were not able to use them accurately or appropriately when they wanted to communicate in French. This gap between knowing the rules and being able to use the language is the most serious criticism leveled at the grammar-translation method. For learners who want to understand, read, speak, and write in a foreign language, the grammar-translation method may provide a foundation of knowledge, but it does little to develop oral communication skills. This limitation led to the development of the audio-lingual method in the United States during the 1940s and ’50s.

### *The Audio-Lingual Approach*

World War II, and later the Cold War, created a need for more Americans to learn foreign languages in the quickest, most effective way possible. The audio-lingual method was devised in response to this need.

Based on principles of behaviorial psychology, this method attempts to drum the structure of a language into students’ brains, or in other words, to make it a habit learned through stimulus-response reinforcement techniques, assuming the best way to teach grammar is not to explain it, but to drill it. In audio-lingual classrooms, the teacher presents dialogues which the students memorize and repeat, and conducts pattern drills which present, manipulate, and reinforce the structure. The emphasis is on developing oral skills, because in the “natural” order of language

learning, reading and writing follow listening and speaking. In the strictest forms of the audio-lingual method, translation is forbidden.

When I first encountered this approach to language teaching, I was astounded at how fluently my students were able to produce certain structures, without necessarily having learned the grammar rule governing their use. For example, they said *ils sont* (they are) or *elle est* (she is) quite automatically, whereas students learning French via the grammar-translation method tended to go through a rather long process in order to come up with these two forms if they wanted to use them. The process went something like this: “I want to say ‘they are.’ *Are* is the verb ‘to be.’ Let’s see, that’s the verb *etre* in French, present tense, the third-person plural conjugation, so that’s *je suis, tu es, il est . . . ils sont*. There it is. I’ve got it. I should use *ils sont!*”

In contrast, the automatic response produced by the audio-lingual method seemed impressive. However, as time went on, I found students’ apparent mastery of certain structures seemed to disappear whenever they were given the opportunity to express themselves creatively in speaking or in conversation. In addition, they struggled to read authentic texts and wrote appallingly poor compositions.

The focus of the audio-lingual method, like that of the grammar-translation method, is on learning grammatical forms first. After students have had sufficient practice to lead them to mastery of the forms, they are given the opportunity to use them so that their limitations become apparent. Mastery of the form, however it is achieved, does not necessarily lead to an ability to communicate using the language.

### ***The Communicative Language Approach***

Faced with this problem in the 1960s and ’70s, and quite disillusioned with the audio-lingual method for failing to deliver on its promises, researchers and teachers began to reexamine their assumptions about the language learning process. Though they acknowledged that to know a language one must know its structure, they also recognized that knowing a language means being able to use it in meaningful ways. They began to ask what would happen if language students put meaning, rather than form, in the foreground.

These questions, and subsequent research in the fields of psychology, linguistics, and second-language acquisition, have led to the development of what has become known as a communicative approach to language study. This approach, as its name implies, emphasizes the communicative rather than the structural nature of language. It assumes that knowing a language means knowing how to use that language appropriately to communicate in a given context. It also assumes that the best way to learn to communicate is by communicating. Rather than beginning either by explaining the grammar or by drilling it, proponents of a communicative approach argue that the foreign language class should provide students with opportunities to learn by doing, or more specifically, by engaging in communicative experiences in the target language.

Communicative experiences can be broadly explained as activities that involve students in the expression, interpretation, or negotiation of meaning. For example, a student describing the floor plan of his or her home is involved in an expression of meaning, which another student listening to and then attempting to draw that floor plan is involved in the interpretation of meaning. Any requests for repetition or clarification involve both students in negotiation. The communicative approach to language teaching emphasizes the development of these skills of expression, interpretation, and negotiation. It focuses on meaning rather than on form, and the development of formal grammatical knowledge plays a secondary role in the classroom.

### ***Teaching Methods***

As yet, there is no one method of communicative language teaching. This is partly because theorists are still arguing about the underlying assumptions, and they hesitate to make the sort of sweeping recommendations which led to the adoption and then the rejection of the audio-lingual method. In the meantime, teachers around the world who don’t have the time to wait until the theory is perfected have begun to take these assumptions and apply them to their classroom teaching practices.

As a result, there are some identifiable characteristics of communicative language teaching which I would like to outline here. I have drawn the examples from my own teaching experience.

First, there is a strong emphasis on target language use in the classroom. The target language (the language which students are learning) is the primary means of communication between students and their teacher. English (or the students' mother tongue) is used either to a much lesser extent or not at all. The classroom itself becomes a context in which students are able to hear and use the second language meaningfully.

In addition, there is an emphasis on giving students as much input in the target language as possible. Activities are structured so that students at all levels have many opportunities to hear or read the language as it is normally spoken or written in discourse rather than in isolated sentences. Such input is used as the starting point rather than the culmination of a lesson because it requires students to focus on interpreting the input while giving them examples of how the grammar is used to convey meaning.

Second, in the communicative language approach, teaching activities are structured so that students use the target language as often as possible to try to communicate meaning to others. They are given many opportunities to interact using the language they are learning. In some classrooms, this means that students work often in pairs or small groups on oral work because their opportunities to interact with the teacher are limited by class size. Students are given a clear task to accomplish using the target language, which motivates their communication. Students may be asked to conduct a survey by interviewing each other in pairs to find out when they do certain activities such as watching television, studying, eating meals, or listening to music. Or, working in pairs, students may be asked to describe and compare two pictures which are almost identical in order to find the subtle differences between them, without looking at one another's pictures.

Third, communicative language teaching tends to be task-based instruction. In other words, teachers look at lesson plans less in terms of grammar to be covered, and more in terms of tasks which they want students to accomplish using the language. The focus of the lessons is to

prepare students to do something with the language, rather than merely to present or practice material. For example, the culminating task for one of my first units in a second-year class was to respond to a letter ostensibly written by one of my francophone African friends, Khorotoum, who was coming to spend a month in the U.S. In her letter, she anticipated the great differences between the two cultures and asked my students to help her prepare by sending her a description of their family, their typical activities, and their house.

A sequence of tasks, completed over several days, prepared students to write an answer to her in French. In one of the first lessons I had given students input about Khorotoum's African family by drawing and discussing her family tree. Students later interacted in pairs, giving their family trees to one another. On another day, they conducted a survey of typical activities mentioned above. On yet another day I compared the typical features of an American house with the African village houses which would be familiar to Khorotoum. Students also did the floor plan activity I already mentioned.

I did present some grammar during this unit, but the explanations were brief, and were given after, rather than before, some of the activities. This is also fairly typical of communicative language teaching. There is not a linear progression from grammar point, to practice, to showing how one can use the rule in speaking or in writing. Instead, class activities move back and forth from input to interactive tasks, and the teacher stops to point out grammar rules along the way. Students use the rules all the time, however, often without being aware of it, as they interpret and try to express meaning in the context of the tasks they are given to do.

### *Evaluating the Communicative Approach*

It is too soon to pass judgment on the successes and limitations of a communicative approach to language teaching. There is a growing body of empirical research which suggests that students need input as well as opportunities to interact in order to develop communicative skills in the language they are learning.

Since I have begun using a more communicative approach, I have found that my students' comprehension of the target language, as well as their ability to express themselves in speaking and writing, is greatly improved. Students who have had experience of another method say they feel they are really learning to use language for the first time. They have also found the process more stimulating and fun because they are primarily involved in the expression and interpretation of meaning. They have also learned a great deal about each other, about me, and about the francophone world. Critics of communicative language teaching argue, however, that by emphasizing learning by doing, rather than by teaching or drilling grammar, accuracy may be sacrificed for fluency.

The argument about the best way to teach a foreign language, whether by grammar teaching or by a more communicative approach is centuries old and unlikely to be resolved easily. People recognize that knowing the rules of a language is not the same as knowing the language, yet one cannot use a language without applying its rules. An appropriate balance between rules and use is clearly difficult to maintain.

As a teacher with experience in using each of the above approaches, I find it important to understand the "why" of what I am doing in the classroom. It helps me evaluate both the successes and the limitations of my teaching in a more objective manner.

### **Reference Books for Foreign Language Teachers**

These books are very practical, providing a wealth of ideas for listening, comprehension, reading, speaking, writing, grammar practice, and vocabulary development. They also include useful introductions which give some principles to use as guides in designing tasks. All these books give examples in English, but they can easily be translated.

#### **General**

Nunan, D., *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

#### **Listening**

Anderson, A., and T. Lynch, *Listening*. Oxford University Press, 1988.  
Morgan, J., and M. Rinvolucri, *Once Upon a Time: Using Stories in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Ur, P., *Teaching Listening Comprehension*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.

#### **Reading**

Collie, J., and S. Slater, *Literature in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Grellet, F., *Developing Reading Skills: A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises*. Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Maley, A., and A. Duff, *The Inward Ear: Poetry in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

#### **Oral Interaction/Conversation**

Klippel, F., *Keep Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Maley, A., and A. Duff, *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Porter Ladousse, G., *Role Play*. Oxford University Press, 1987.

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## 35.

***Second Language Issues for MKs in National Schools*****Cynthia Storrs**

Few missionaries forget the day they arrived on the field. It generally ranks right up there with their first kiss, the day Kennedy was shot, or learning the truth about Santa, in terms of their recall power. Often equally accessible in the memory bank of missionaries is the first day of language study. Regardless of all that mission agencies do to prepare a fledgling missionary, the first encounter with a new language often arrives like a punch or a bucket of cold water, even when one has been forewarned and forearmed.

Meanwhile, observe the missionary kids, our MKs. Having had little or no preparation, many sail blithely off into preschool, and after some initial noticeable discomfort, appear to acquire the foreign language as if by osmosis. No problem—or so it seems. Sometimes there are no problems; sometimes problems surface later. Sometimes the scope of these problems is such that the family decides they can no longer stay on the field. The result is a rupture in the ministry and uprooting of relationships, accompanied by overwhelming feelings of frustration, guilt, and blame. What is particularly unfortunate is that some of the problems could have been avoided, had attention been paid to certain details from the start.

***Language Learning and Cultural Adaptation***

As a missionary working in MK education, I am totally committed to second language acquisition and cultural adaptation for the entire missionary family on all levels. Successful linguistic and cultural adaptation have a significant influence not only on the quality of ministry, but also on the quality of life. However, having worked in a foreign language church plant project, and having reared and educated two small children overseas in a foreign language, I am also aware of the demands language and cultural acquisition make on parents and MKs.

We will address many of the issues involved in MK language and cultural adaptation, and consider ways to facilitate the process. I believe wholeheartedly that MK bilingualism/biculturalism is not only a worthy goal, but one with benefits that will ultimately outweigh a monolingual education. But it is also a process which must be undertaken with parental and community support. We will explore these issues as well, in the hope of avoiding or minimizing some of the pitfalls traditionally associated with MK second language learning and culture acquisition.

***Methodology***

One of the first questions involves methodology: “What is the best way for MKs to learn a foreign language?” Part of the answer to this question is linked to two other questions: “Why is the child learning the language?” and “How old is the child?” If the child is to learn the language only for conversational purposes, his training is much less complicated, and simple exposure and interaction in a social situation may suffice. If the child is learning the language and will be expected to perform on an academic level with his peers, the demands are much greater, and his training must reflect this.

The age of the MK should be taken into consideration. Happily, age is rarely a barrier to language learning. One often hears that after a certain age, we cannot learn a foreign language. This is simply not true. There is much research to indicate that after the age of ten or twelve years, the chances of achieving a native *accent* are diminished, but learning a language involves more than just learning an accent. There are advantages and challenges present for language learners at each stage of life.

As to specific methodology, there are many schools of thought on this subject, and seemingly little agreement. A few general principles are probably more helpful than a notion of which language school to subscribe to. There is much research which indicates that learning a second language has many similarities with learning our first or mother tongue. The acquisition of our first language is guided by an innate language ability, a sort of mindmap, which facilitates its learning. There are a number of principles we can infer from this. First, acquisition of our first language will transfer to and help in acquiring a second one. Therefore, it

is imperative that parents not neglect an MK's mother tongue. Missionaries often debate whether the second language (L2) should be used in the home. Certainly, the L2 should be used when other L2 speakers are present, out of respect for one's guests. Otherwise, parents should be encouraged to do all they can to foster the native language, for two reasons: first, a child's L2 ability will rarely exceed his ability in the mother tongue, and second, the home environment may be the only source of input for the mother tongue an MK has, particularly if he or she attends a national school. The parents will be the only source of vocabulary and expression, at least until a child reads, which should also be actively encouraged and modeled by the parents. A strong mother tongue base will help in L2 acquisition.

### ***Acquiring Language***

Another question often raised concerns informal versus formal language acquisition. Practically speaking, is it of more value to memorize verbs or to let your child pass the morning wandering in the market? If he has to pass a test on the verb table, obviously he has to memorize it. But for general acquisition, both children and adults may learn more and learn it faster chatting their way through a market place. This approach will involve them in a task that is both useful and low-stress (or, causing less stress than a formalized test).

Another axiom is to learn a little, but use it a lot. This is what happens when we put young children in an L2 nursery school, where they cannot say much, but they say it often! Older children can achieve the same effect through sports or music. MKs (and their parents) need to have social times, informal language experiences, with little pressure put upon them, to test out the knowledge they have learned in more formal environments. Formalized schooling often imparts much knowledge, with little opportunity to use it.

### ***Attitude and Language Learning***

Regardless of the specific methodology chosen, a critical factor in L2 acquisition (some would say *the* critical factor) is attitude. For an MK, this involves not only his or her personal attitude, but the attitude of his

parents, and the attitude of the L2 speakers around him. I recall sympathizing with my children about their verb tables and (wrongly) agreeing with a comment like, "Yes, I hate these stupid verb conjugations, too." The problem is that I may be communicating something other than sympathy to my children. If I think the language is impossible and not worthy of my effort, I am subtly communicating the same thing about the people who use these verbs. What I am also communicating to my children is that my desire to identify with these speakers is very low, and that my attitude toward them is basically negative. This results in poor L2 acquisition.

Equally important is the attitude of the L2 speakers toward the MK. A language learner must have a desire to accept, identify with, and imitate the L2 speakers and their language. However, for successful acculturation to occur, the L2 speakers must have an equal desire to accept the L2 learner. Otherwise, for example, social situations, which are desirable places for informal language practice, will not occur.

On one hand, it is important that missionary parents do everything possible to make friends with L2 speakers, and encourage L2 friendships for their children. Whole class birthday parties at the elementary level are a great way to develop social networks. At the teen level, offering your home for a hamburger barbeque or coaching a baseball team can be conducive to informal language practice and developing relationships. It is also advisable to try to help a child fit in tangible ways, with similar clothing, school items, etc., to de-emphasize the cultural differences. The less an MK is regarded as an outsider, the more likely he or she is to be taken into the L2 inner circle.

On the other hand, parents of MKs should resist the notion of "going native" by denying or ignoring a child's own linguistic and cultural heritage. Going native may result in the MK facing a loss of identity, something most language learners experience naturally to a certain extent. If excessive, a loss of identity will result in feelings of anger and resentment toward the target culture. If children perceive the L2 and its culture as a threat to their cultural identity, they will reject the second culture in an effort to preserve their identity. As language is the salient manifestation of that culture, this rejection will probably result in poor L2 learning.

### ***What Does Bilingual Really Mean?***

We often hear that a certain MK is bilingual. What exactly does that mean? A balanced bilingual child is one who has age-appropriate abilities in both languages. Parents and grandparents should not expect that this will mean that the MK will be as fluent in both languages as a monolingual child is in either of these languages. Acquiring a new language is a function of many variables including effort and time. The problem is that there just are not enough hours in the day for a person to achieve equal monolingual fluency in two languages. Obviously, a child who spends sixteen hours a day hearing and interacting in one language will generally have a greater knowledge of that language, compared to a child who has only eight hours per day exposure, all other things being equal.

The bilingual child has some advantages over the monolingual child. Much of the research indicates there are transfers made between languages. Knowledge acquired in one language will transfer to knowledge and be expressed as skills in another language. This transfer of knowledge and skills is known as metacognition, and in some tests, metacognition in bilingual children has resulted in I.Q. scores which surpass monolingual children in fluency, flexibility of thought, originality, abstractions, and problem solving.

### ***Conversational vs. Academic Language Use***

However, these advantages will generally require some kind of parental and academic support. As mentioned above, a distinction can be made between children who study L2 for solely conversational purposes versus those who acquire L2 for academic purposes. A four- to six-year-old child who needs to be conversant in the L2 can probably achieve a basic interpersonal communication skill level, roughly analogous to a monolingual child of his same age, with one or two years of social interaction. However, it will take this same child approximately five to seven years to achieve a cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) analogous to a monolingual child of his age, a level which would be necessary to successfully complete studies in the L2.

Many teachers who do not have experience with bilingual children are unaware of this distinction. They will often feel that the young MK is

prepared for further education, judging only on the BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) level. In truth, however, the child will actually need extra help for a few more years until his or her CALP level is equal to other L2 monolingual children. Parents need to be aware of this discrepancy and recognize that they are probably not able to bridge the gap. A native L2 speaker can be invaluable in helping an MK deal with pronunciation, idiomatic expressions, and various ways of solving problems. This often discourages missionary parents and makes them want to take their MKs out of national schools. When a child is in the elementary grades, an L2 high school student is probably more than competent to help. If a child is older, engaging a professional to tutor him is probably wise.

However, parents are strongly advised to evaluate these differences before starting an older child in a second language situation. If a child is age twelve, the five to seven years necessary for him or her to catch up academically may not allow him to successfully complete high school. Meanwhile, the child will possibly suffer emotionally and socially from the tremendous L2 demands made.

If an MK begins L2 in the lower elementary years, parents should seriously consider repeating a grade in the second language to allow him or her to catch up linguistically. In addition, it will give him practice on content material with which he is already familiar or which was learned previously in his mother tongue. Fortunately, in most other countries, repeating a grade is not at all frowned on as it is in the U.S. In fact, it is often the norm.

Again, there are great advantages to a bilingual education, but parents must realize it comes with certain demands on the entire family. If both parents are not willing to make the adjustments necessary to help a child through a bilingual education, it will probably not be a successful or happy option for the MK.

### ***What's Our Goal: Bilingual or Bicultural Students?***

Finally, it is important to realize that our goal as missionaries and MKs is to be not only bilingual, but bicultural; many experts feel that the two cannot be separated. MKs need to learn about their new holidays and

traditions, but not at the expense of their native ones. Both are important, to give roots in their home culture and wings to fly in their new one. This can be achieved through many ways without burdening the MK with additional studies: family reading times, including poetry, folk tales, even comic books; folk songs and pop music; stamp and coin collections; national sports; celebrating all U.S. (and national) holidays; thermometers, scales, and cookbooks in both languages will teach math and science.

English reading and writing skills should be worked on continuously through elementary and high schools years, but without being burdensome to the MK. Some writing skills can be developed through diaries and letters to family members. Reading in both languages, including Bible studies, should be encouraged as a family hobby. During high school, there are many correspondence courses available to help develop English skills. The MK needs to feel comfortable in both worlds, and the language and vocabulary associated with each one is important in making a person truly bicultural.

Although my daughter was only four years old at the time, she remembers her first day of language study quite distinctly. It was a day in kindergarten that began with much excitement and ended with many tears! But she looks back on that memory now and smiles. When asked if all the trauma, the extra studies, the lists of spelling words in two languages, were worth it, she responded very positively. "Being bicultural gave me a much broader perspective on the world," she said. Was it worth it? "Totally!" And from a California MK, that's about as good as it gets.

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## 36.

### *Multiple Choice in MK Education*

#### **Alan McIlhenny**

When I first went to Nepal, I ordered some furniture from the local carpenter's shop. I thought I had given him clear plans for a kitchen table and had coped reasonably well using my newly acquired Nepali language skills. What a disappointment it was when the table was delivered with all the legs different lengths. I rushed back to the carpenter, determined to show him how to make a proper table. I was greatly deflated to discover another table being made in his workshop with the same uneven leg pattern. The carpenter patiently pointed out that as the mud floor of his workshop was not level, he always adjusted the leg's lengths to ensure that every table he made sat straight and square on *his* floor. His tables were masterpieces in his workshop, but he seemed oblivious to the fact that they did not transplant well to other situations.

If we reflect on the process of educating missionary children, we realize that if we use only traditional educational methods, designed to "fit the floor" of the non-missionary child in a home-country situation, then our methods may not fully transplant to the rather different floor of the missionary child. The three ICMKs have clearly identified just how unique the situation of the missionary child is. I want to discuss the differences and hope to demonstrate that unique educational methods are necessary.

#### ***Educational Philosophy***

Before exploring the differences, I want to build a foundation applicable to any school. I will share my educational philosophy so that you better understand the suggestions I make. My goal for all students is to help them develop to their fullest potential and individual excellence by encouraging them to pursue a wide variety of activities with a sense of personal commitment. I do not want them to be dependent on a teacher's guidance to obtain knowledge. Instead, I hope to develop in them a thirst for knowledge and to give them the tools to find this knowledge. I am not talking just of academic learning, but also of seeking true

God-given knowledge. I hope, by taking an individual interest in each student, to give him or her a sense of personal worth.

I want to encourage a sense of purpose within the student body, both individual and communal. I hope they can balance competitiveness and ambition with a sense of the worth of others and a concern for their welfare. I was encouraged when a senior student asked if he and his friends could set up prayer cells in the school. Now small groups of students are daily meeting and praying somewhere in the school during breaks and lunch time.

I hope to develop in them a sense of the world beyond school: the world of work and the world of need. I have a particular concern here for missionary children. Sadly, while most of their parents may be very active in their communities, the children can often become isolated from the realities of their surroundings. Sometimes the only adult nationals they relate to are servants in their home or school. What sort of an attitude does this develop?

Let me start my examination of the uniqueness of these children by going back to the discussions at the Manila and Nairobi ICMK conferences.

#### ***The Uniqueness of Missionary Children***

In Manila, Professor. Brian Hill defined some of the cultural issues which impact missionary children. He argued that the curriculum of a school for missionary kids should include studies related to both the parental culture (of furloughs) and the indigenous culture (of the host country). The cultural perspective that has the greatest influence on the child comes from the school's subculture. Yet, have we given much thought to the influence of the school subculture?

Within our multinational, multid denominational schools, an exciting opportunity exists. In Manila, Brian Hill challenged us as educators to grasp this opportunity to open up a Christian world view for our students.

We were challenged to step outside our cultural conditioning, both national culture and denominational subculture, in order to provide a new transcultural overview.

### ***Criteria and Constraints***

While I agree with Hill's model, I feel a need to add some practical considerations. Paul Nelson suggested certain criteria at ICMK-Manila which should be used in any new educational model: 1) the program must be practical in terms of finance, expertise required to carry it out, and the geographic regions involved, 2) the curriculum must be international enough to meet the needs of the multinational community, 3) it must not be overdemanding of the parents' time, and 4) the program must meet the needs of the complex educational system to which children are becoming oriented and the technological world in which they live.

I added the following constraints in developing the KISC model after talking with a large number of missionary and expatriate parents: 1) the system should offer an education of comparable standard, covering the same range of subjects as are available in the student's home country, 2) the system should provide a healthy environment for the learner in the areas of peers, social, and academic interaction, 3) the system should demand minimal supervision and academic input from parents, 4) the system should enable the family unit to remain intact for the maximum period possible each year, 5) the system should allow for the needs of each learner and take advantage of his or her unique cultural and learning environment, and 6) the system should allow learners to continue their studies wherever they may have to travel, particularly during furloughs.

### ***Practical Realities in MK Education***

At previous ICMKs we have heard about the problem of re-entry. This is often a traumatic experience, and it becomes more difficult if the child does not fit in academically. Parents often plan to return to their home country when their eldest child reaches the limit of the available educational option on the field. The eldest child has finished his course of study, but most likely younger children have not. They may be only partially through their program, which may be very different from what their peers are doing in their home country. These younger children will have a more difficult time during re-entry.

If re-entry is unplanned, the experience will be even more traumatic and it is more difficult for the children to fit into schools in their home country. Therefore, to facilitate re-entry, we need to ensure that our

curriculum matches the home country as closely as possible in content, order, and pace.

But is this possible in a school which most likely caters to students from a wide variety of nationalities? Certainly no one country's curriculum can cope with all these needs. What we really need is a model that offers multiple choice. We need a model which not only offers a choice between the British or American systems, but also has something to offer the children of our Dutch, German, Japanese, Korean, and Scandinavian brothers and sisters in mission.

The need for specialist or content area teachers is a major problem. Each year MK school administrators struggle to recruit and retain an adequate number of staff members to keep their schools operating. We need an educational model which can survive times of specialist teacher shortage.

There is a very large specter that looms over certain students, especially those from Britain, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. That is the specter of national examinations. Are students going to receive sufficiently high results on their exams to enable them to enter higher education at the institution of their choice? The competition for university entrance is intense in most countries. MKs have to compete with peers at home who have attended well-equipped schools with subject specialist teachers and tremendous resources. Dare we expose our children to anything less than the same? Shouldn't our students be given the opportunity to study a curriculum which will enable them to pursue their career choice in the country of their choice? Again, we need a school that allows for multiple choices.

### ***KISC—The Model***

The Kathmandu International Study Center, which opened in February 1987, is my attempt to design a multiple choice system satisfies the unique needs of MKs. It started five years ago with just eleven students, and now has more than sixty. We have seven full-time missionary teachers and receive part-time assistance from parents and friends. I call this the international supported self-study (SSS) model. This approach started in the U.K. to cope with teacher shortages and to provide

specialized courses with limited enrollment. SSS is normally used in British schools for just a few subjects. As far as I know, we are the only school where it is used for the complete academic core. Other “schools” use correspondence courses or self-study materials, but please note that the word *support* plays an important role in this system. It is not just self-study.

Basically, each student studies his own home country’s core academic curriculum through the medium of supported self-study. The individualized study is enriched through group activities involving mixed nationalities. At the heart of this approach lies a management system which balances and controls three main elements: monitoring student progress, providing encouragement and motivation, and coordinating enrichment activities.

### ***Materials***

Self-study materials are chosen with great care, and at KISC we have two main sources: complete self-study programs from a correspondence school, or our own packages consisting of different self-study programs or suitable textbooks from the student’s home country. Our Australian and New Zealand students use correspondence courses provided by their home country or state. Our younger American students use materials we have put together, while students in grade nine and above use materials from the University of Nebraska. Our British students at younger levels use a variety of self-study packages we have put together from various sources. Most of our GCSE program is based on material purchased from Oxford Open Learning. The majority of students’ self-study work is marked at KISC, but some correspondence schools require that they grade the work. In addition to the self-study packages, we are gradually building up additional resources, such as computer software, cassette tapes, and library books, which can be used by students or teachers to supplement the basic packages.

### ***Tutorials***

Tutorials are important for success in a self-study program. It is the exceptional student who can maintain motivation solely through

self-study materials. The majority of school age children need tutorial support. At KISC, each student has a tutorial session each week in each academic subject. Ideally, these tutorials take place in groups of five to eight students, but some are one-on-one sessions. During the 45-minute session, the tutor discusses the work that’s been done during the previous week, plans and discusses work for the next week, and then engages in activities of interest to students in the group. We have found that a good tutorial can more than compensate a student whose self-study material is of marginal quality. Beyond the weekly tutorial sessions, students have immediate access to subject specialists on an individual basis while they are working on the self-study. We rotate the duty times of teachers in the learning center so that at some time throughout each day a specialist is available for consultation.

### ***Enrichment Program***

Our students spend about three-sevenths of their time in self-study. The remainder is spent either in tutorials or group activities. Each student is allowed to choose at least two of the group “electives” available each term. The electives we offer depend on the interests of staff or parent volunteers. Our electives have included art, astronomy, crafts, Chinese cooking, drama, gardening, home economics, Nepali language, piano, and woodworking. In addition, there are compulsory group classes in sports as well as current events and religious education. The latter classes explore our common Christian world view amid our different nationalities. Each term we also explore aspects of the fascinating cultural surroundings of Nepal such as our annual trek into the Himalayas. Our GCSE students had the opportunity to do their geography coursework on glaciation by actually visiting a glacier!

### ***Benefits and Results***

The fact that KISC students use a self-study program designed around their home country’s curriculum creates two possibilities for furloughs. They can continue self-study in a home school situation, or attend a local school knowing that they will not be too out of step with their peers, at least in terms of curriculum.

This self-study approach enables us to offer two types of attendance for families who live in remote areas: full-time or part-time boarding. The part-time boarders may come into school for half the normal ten-week term and pursue their studies at home for the rest of the term. We have had students who attended KISC for alternating terms: home-schooling with their parents for one term, and then boarding at school for the next term. This system offers flexibility to families who do not like the idea of the family unit being separated for 40 weeks each year. Families who are comfortable with the boarding concept can send their children into KISC for full-time boarding.

The KISC model does not completely solve the problems for non-English speaking students, but it goes a long way toward solving it. We have a group of Dutch students who do much of their academic program using Dutch textbooks. They have a Dutch tutor for their tutorial sessions and they join other students for enrichment programs in English. Another benefit of using of self-study material means that if a subject specialist is unavailable for a time, it is feasible for students to continue their studies.

Finally, over 80% of our GCSE results have been at the A, B or C level, well above the British average. Examination results are not the only measure of success, but I don't know of anyone who has not been able to enter the school of his choice.

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## 37. *Understanding the Needs of Asian MKs*

**Polly Chan**

Statistics show that during the last ten years the missionary movement in the two-thirds world has grown approximately five times faster than the Western missions movement. Because of this rapid growth in missions, the need to care for the educational needs of Asian MKs has become a pressing issue.

### *Educational Needs for Asian MKs*

The educational needs for Asian MKs are not much different from those of non-Asians. Almost all Asian missionary parents hope that their children can maintain their mother tongue and learn about the culture, history, and geography of their home country when they are on the mission field. Besides learning their mother tongue, learning English is also important. The educational system in some Asian countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Philippines is bilingual. MKs from these countries need to acquire both their mother language and English in order to fit back into schools in their home countries. Since English is important in Asia, parents from countries such as Korea, Japan, and Taiwan hope that their children can learn English well.

In the past, very little was done to meet the educational needs of Asian MKs. Many Asian parents sent their children to mission schools because of the Christian environment and English teaching. I have met many Asian parents who have sent their children to MK schools. They are glad their children have learned very good English. However, they are concerned that their children are losing their mother language. There are cases where children do not know much of their mother language and their parents do not understand much English. Consequently, the parent-child relationship is hampered. Often since these children have not learned much about their home culture, it is not uncommon for them to have difficulty fitting back into life and studies in their home country.

### ***Challenges for Asian Sending Countries***

A growing number of Asian mission leaders are alarmed by the attrition rate of their experienced missionaries. They have found out that children's education is one of the main reasons these missionaries dropped out. In light of the seriousness of this problem, some missions have become more intentional about helping MKs maintain their mother language and culture. A Korean MK school has now been established in Manila, the Philippines. Some Asian missionaries from other countries are planning to set up MK hostels either on the mission field or in their home country. Moreover, Christian teachers have been sent to various fields to teach MKs their mother language.

It is exciting to know that Asian sending countries have been doing more to meet the educational needs of their MKs. However, because of the small number of MKs from some countries, inter-mission MK care committees and projects have been launched to care for their MKs. The hope is that some successful new educational models will also be developed to benefit our Asian MKs.

### ***The Challenge for MK Schools***

Although some Asian countries have been developing their own MK educational models, MK schools which were established by Western countries still remain a valid option for many Asian families. Traditionally, these schools aim at preparing Western MKs to return to their home countries. Naturally, Western culture, mainly that of American or Britain, dominates the school. Consequently, these MK schools which have well-preserved traditional educational goals end up either acculturizing or restricting the admission of the non-English-speaking Asian children. As the trend of missions has changed and the number of non-Western MKs increases, it is high time for MK schools to re-examine their educational goals and establish a more multicultural learning environment.

If changes are necessary, what will be their impact on Western students who are preparing to attend schools in their home countries? When I was living in the United States, I met some MKs who had returned to the States for college. Most of them had grown up on the mission field and attended MK schools overseas. Since they had

graduated from schools where American culture predominated, I thought they would fit back into life in their home country very well. To my surprise that was not the case. Although they did very well academically in college, many found it very difficult to adjust socially. They found that they were not purely American anymore. Certainly, there are many things in MK schools which are worth preserving. However, the idea of sheltering students in schools with a purely Western culture needs to be challenged.

### ***Increasing Understanding of Asian Culture***

Making changes may raise some significant questions about our level of cultural understanding. How much do the faculty and administrators of MK schools know about the Asian cultures these children come from? To what extent do we accept, respect, and appreciate their culture and its differences? Are we able to distinguish what is culturally appropriate and what is not? If we find the cultural practices of some Asian families biblically unacceptable or harmful to the development of the children, can we communicate that message to the parents effectively?

As an Asian Chinese I want to address several dimensions of cultural difference and discuss their implications for MK education. These cultural differences between Western and Asian countries involve individualism versus collectivism, "power distance," and uncertainty avoidance. I will use illustrations from my experiences as an MK educator as well as from the experiences of Asian missionary parents whose children have attended MK schools.

### ***Individualism versus Collectivism***

"Individualism is a cultural pattern found in most northern and western regions of Europe and in North America. Collectivism is common in Asia, Africa, South America and the Pacific."<sup>1</sup> Basically, individualistic cultures emphasize personal goals and interests whereas collectivist cultures emphasize the goals and interests of in-groups such as the extended family, the tribe, and the company. People from these

two cultural backgrounds hold different values and attitudes which affect their behaviors.

“In collectivist societies, education is a way of gaining prestige in one’s social environment and of joining a higher status group; whereas in individualistic societies, education is a way of improving one’s economic worth and self-respect based on ability and competence.”<sup>2</sup> For someone from an individualistic culture, high academic achievement satisfies a personal desire. However, for someone from a collectivist culture, in addition to self-promotion, educational success earns recognition for his or her in-groups.

Recognizing that a good education will likely bring a promising future for their children, parents in collectivist cultures like Asia will do their best to put their children in a good school. Neither of my parents are literate, but they were willing to sell property in order to send me and my siblings to college overseas. Nevertheless, we clearly knew that our parents had high expectations for us upon our graduation. Our academic success would mean prosperity for the family. However, if we failed, besides having a painful present and ruining a promising future, we would bring shame to our parents.

Perhaps having their children prosper in the secular world is not a high priority for Asian missionary parents. Nonetheless, they all hope that their children will receive the best education possible. In MK schools, in addition to the academic and recreational subjects the normal school curriculum provides, these children have opportunities to learn different languages and cultures. For example, Asian MKs learn at least three languages: English (which is the medium of communication at school), the national language of the mission field, and their own mother tongue. Usually, Asian parents also want their children to learn to play a musical instrument.

Recently a Chinese MK attending a mission school was regularly having to stay after school to complete his classwork because he had weak concentration skills. However, in addition to his normal homework, he also had extra Chinese lessons, and piano practice. It was not hard to understand why he always complained he did not have much time to play. His parents responded by encouraging him to persevere so that he would have more useful skills later on in his life.

In one sense his parents were right. Children need to learn perseverance through hard work. However, different children have different abilities and talents. Teachers must help parents understand the abilities of their children and guide parents in choosing classes and activities that most benefit each child. Otherwise, the children may become overloaded with schoolwork and activities or may fail and suffer guilt because they have let their parents down.

In collectivist cultures, it is not uncommon for an individual to sacrifice his pleasure for the sake of in-groups. Some in-groups are more important than others, and for Asians the family is ahead of all others. It is not uncommon to see Asian parents, particularly the Chinese, change jobs or houses so that their child can live in the best neighborhood and attend the best school. The mother of the ancient Chinese philosopher, Mencius, moved three times in order to get away from undesirable neighborhoods. She stopped moving when he could concentrate on his books.

Because of the limited educational options available for Asian MKs on many mission fields, some parents have chosen to send their children to boarding schools. This can be hard on any family, but especially on Asian families with their strong parent-child bonds.

One Taiwanese missionary couple chose to send their two children to an MK boarding school. However, the children’s grandparents and their family friends were concerned about the separation from their parents and relatives. The parents chose this option because they believed their children would receive the best education possible and return to their home culture upon graduation. However, the situation was further complicated when Western missionaries suggested to the parents that the school was designed for Western MKs and might not be suitable for their children.

While parental concern is a universal reality, some cultures express it more strongly. First, because of the emphasis on cultural family ties, this Taiwanese couple found it extremely hard to separate from their children. Second, the grandparents and family friends’ objections placed immense pressure on them. By understanding these aspects of Chinese culture, the school staff was able to empathize with these parents and give them the emotional support they needed.

“Within the in-group in collectivist cultures, one finds much social behavior that is associative (giving help or support).”<sup>3</sup> This Taiwanese family was pitied by their friends at church when they realized that the children would go to boarding school. The friends felt sorry for the children being “abandoned” by their parents. They urged the couple to send their children to a nearby Chinese school instead, and even offered to pay the expensive school fees.

After much thought and prayer, the couple still felt it was right for them to send their children to the mission boarding school. When they told their friends about their decision, the friends became very angry. In collectivist Asian cultures, great value is placed on saving face. The friends felt they had lost face because their offer was rejected. As a result, the couple experienced even more pressure! As this case illustrates, when a person from a collectivist culture makes a decision, he is not only making a personal decision, but must also consider the impact of the decision on his in-groups.

**Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance**

Power distance determines the role expectations between teacher and student, while uncertainty avoidance determines how students learn. These cultural differences help to explain the differences in educational philosophy and teaching methods between Asian and Western cultures.

“The extent to which the less powerful persons in a society accept inequality in power and consider it as normal”<sup>4</sup> is defined as the power distance. In comparing Asian cultures with its large power distance (LPD) and Western cultures with its small power distance (SPD), it is obvious that the former is teacher-centered while the latter is student-centered (see page 336).

In LPD cultures, teachers are expected to be full of wisdom and have all the answers. They initiate things and assume absolute authority. Therefore, students are expected to show great respect toward their teachers and conform to their teaching. However, in SPD cultures, teachers and students have a more equal relationship. Since truth can be obtained by any competent person, students are encouraged to show personal initiative. They are even allowed to contradict or criticize teachers.

**Differences in Teacher-Student and Student-Student Interaction Related to Power Distance**

<b>Small Power Distance Societies</b>	<b>Large Power Distance Societies</b>
Stress on impersonal truth which can, in principle, be obtained from any competent person	Stress on personal wisdom which is transferred in the relationship with a particular teacher
Teachers should respect the independence of students	Teachers merit the respect of their students
An emphasis on student-centered education (puts a premium on initiative)	An emphasis on teacher-centered education (puts a premium on order)
Teacher expects students to initiate communication	Students expect teacher to initiate communication
Teacher expects students to find their own paths	Students expect teacher to outline the path
Students may speak spontaneously in class	Students may speak only if invited to by the teacher
Students are allowed to contradict or criticize teachers	Teachers are never contradicted or publicly criticized
Effectiveness of learning is related to the amount of two-way communication	Effectiveness of learning is related to the excellence of the teacher
Outside class, teachers are treated as equals	Respect for teachers is also shown outside class
In teacher-student conflicts, parents are expected to side with the student	In teacher-student conflicts, parents are expected to side with the teacher
Younger teachers are more liked than older teachers	Older teachers are more respected than younger teachers

Source: Hofstede in *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*.

### Differences in Teacher-Student and Student-Student Interaction Related to Uncertainty Avoidance

#### Weak Uncertainty Avoidance Societies

Students feel comfortable in unstructured learning situations: vague objectives, broad assignments, no timetables

Teachers are allowed to say, "I don't know"

A good teacher uses plain language

Teacher expects students to initiate communication

Teachers are allowed to behave emotionally (and so are students)

Teachers interpret intellectual disagreement as a stimulating exercise

Teachers seek parents' ideas

#### Strong Uncertainty Avoidance Societies

Students feel comfortable in structured learning situations: precise objectives, detailed assignments, strict timetables

Teachers are expected to have all the answers

A good teacher uses academic language

Students are rewarded for accuracy in problem solving

Teachers are expected to suppress emotions (and so are students)

Teachers interpret intellectual disagreement as personal disloyalty

Teachers consider themselves experts who cannot learn from parents, and parents agree

Source: Hofstede, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*.

Besides power distance, uncertainty avoidance is another cultural difference which affects learning. It is "the extent to which people within a culture are made nervous by situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable, situations which they therefore try to avoid by maintaining strict codes of behavior and a belief in absolute truths."<sup>5</sup> Differences in teacher-student and student-student interaction are directly related to uncertainty avoidance (see page 337).

In general, students in strong uncertainty avoidance (SUA) cultures feel more comfortable in a structured environment where their learning and activities are heavily guided. In contrast, students in weak uncertainty avoidance (WUA) cultures enjoy unstructured and self-directed learning environments. In SUA cultures, learning is content-based and students are passive; whereas in WUA cultures, learning is activity-based and students are actively involved in the learning process.

Most Asia countries belong to LPD and SUA cultures, while most Western countries belong to SPD and WUA cultures. Both Asian and Western educational philosophy and teaching methods have their pros and cons. Asian societies emphasize the teaching of self-sacrifice, group conformity, and respect for age and authority. These are values which have been lost in Western societies where individual interests and self-actualization are stressed. However, the teacher and content-centered teaching approach of Asian societies can be mechanical and impersonal. Instead in Western societies, learning is more interesting and challenging as students actively acquire knowledge and learn to function independently of their teachers.

The concepts of power distance and uncertainty avoidance help to explain the differences in educational philosophy and teaching methods between Asian and Western cultures. This information can be very useful for MK educators as well as missionary parents. A ten-year-old Chinese MK from Hong Kong was attending a mission school dominated by both SPD and WUA cultures. One day, his mother asked the teacher anxiously whether her son was doing well in school. She was concerned because her son did not have to study or do much homework after school, especially in comparison to what would have been expected of him in Hong Kong. One year later the family returned to Hong Kong on furlough and their son attended a regular elementary school. After a few

months, the mother wrote and told the teacher that her son was struggling in school. Obviously, many factors can be cited as causing his adjustment problems. However, we can be sure that the differences in the educational systems and in teaching style between the two cultures were involved in his problems.

If Western educational philosophy and teaching methods continue to dominate MK schools, it is important for teachers to inform Asian parents about the cultural differences in their approach to education. This knowledge helps parents in two ways. First, it helps them in their long-term educational planning. If they plan to send their children to Western MK schools, they need to ask themselves whether their children will continue their education (for college and university) in the Western system as well. Children must make adjustments in every cultural transition they face. However, the older the child gets, the more difficulty he has in adjusting. If parents plan to send their teenagers back to Asia to be educated, what kind of resources will be available to help their teens assimilate into their own culture? Second, understanding the differences in the educational systems will enable parents to help their children adjust to school when they return home on furlough.

### ***Redefining the Goals of MK Schools***

Acknowledging that MKs are third-culture kids will not do these children any good, if MK educators try to mold them to be like children in the home country who have not had any overseas exposure.

Instead it will be of great benefit for MKs if educators affirm the uniqueness of these children and try to make use of the overseas opportunity to enrich their lives. MK schools have one of the richest learning environments. One large MK school I visited had a student body composed of students with than seventeen nationalities. Although the majority were from America, there were students from Europe, South America, Australia, and Asia. Students from each country bring with them the uniqueness of their culture which reflects the beauty of our Creator. What a difference there is between making all students conform to one culture and teaching them how special each culture is in God's sight and helping them appreciate the beauty of each other's cultures. With the diversity of students in our schools, it is easy to show favoritism

or play up the greatness of any culture. Nevertheless, it is a marvelous opportunity to impart to children that the truth of the Gospel is that despite their differences, they are all equal and one in Christ.

### ***Turning Vision into Action***

Of course, if educators affirm the importance of minority groups within their school, they must also take responsibility for meeting the educational needs of these children. Besides learning the regular school curriculum, these children also need to learn their mother language and culture.

As I talked to teachers and dorm staff from different MK schools, I was very excited to learn that many attempts have been made to help Asian MKs maintain their mother language and culture within the school. At the same time, the resources of these Asian children have been tapped and used to enrich the lives of other children. I've included some of the activities attempted and suggestions made by the teachers and boarding home staff (see page 340).

### **Activities and Suggestions**

#### **At School:**

1. Provide weekly language lessons if a native language speaker or teacher is available.
2. Adapt the social studies curriculum and include content about children's home countries and the host country.
3. Assign individual and class projects about children's countries.
4. Recruit suitable long- or short-term Asian staff as teachers.
5. Build up a library of books in children's mother tongue.
6. Invite parents to share about their country and culture in class.
7. Organize international celebrations which aim at exposing children to costumes, special foods, games, and artifacts of their countries.

**At Boarding Home:**

1. Celebrate cultural festivals.
2. Include national foods on the menu.
3. Encourage children to pray in their own language at prayers or at bedtime.
4. Ask children to teach others songs in their own language.
5. Play games that are cultural and might use their language; e.g., Chinese chess.
6. Talk about their culture and language at mealtimes and bedtimes and encourage the children to teach the boarding home staff words from their own language.
7. Encourage children to write letters to parents in their mother tongue rather than English.
8. Encourage the use of their own language when telephoning to parents.
9. Encourage contact, through letters, telephone calls, and visits with the extended family such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.
10. Encourage family and friends to send music tapes and videos in the mother tongue.
11. Encourage parents to use their mother tongue language in the home.
12. Encourage parents to set aside time and energy during holidays to work on the mother tongue and cultural training, and not to communicate in the host language or English simply because it is easier.

Source: *Communication, Culture and Organizational Processes* by Stella Ting-Toomey.

**Perspectives on Change**

Making such big changes is not without its difficulties. Teachers have commented that sometimes it was difficult to find suitable teachers and teaching materials. Moreover, students are often not very motivated to learn their mother language in school. Even worse, very often, parents

were not very good at reinforcing the language learning at home. Also, Western teachers found that their limited understanding of Asian culture made it difficult for them to serve the Asian children in school. Because of the limitation in teaching time, teachers found that if they wanted to expand the width of the curriculum to include more cultural activities, they had to do so at the expense of depth of other subjects. Teachers in larger MK schools found that there was certain resistance in school when changes were implemented.

Problems are inevitable whenever there is a change. Despite these problems, the teaching and dorm staff who have been implementing the changes all remain positive and feel that it is the direction where MK schools should head. Today, many mission schools claim to be international schools. However, the challenge facing the administrators and teachers is to make these schools truly international.

As the first Asian teacher and dorm staff to serve full-time in an MK school for two years, I have some comments about the change. During my years of service, I witnessed many staff members who went to extra effort to meet the special needs of the Asian children in school. All the Asian parents and I deeply appreciated the cultural sensitivity of the staff. What impressed me most was to see that both Westerners and Asians (children, staff, and even parents) in the school had something to contribute to each others' lives. We all learned and served as one in the love of Jesus Christ. In general, all of us who had this vision and attempted to make changes,

affirmed that MK schools could be an excellent training ground for both Western and Asian children.

**Trends in Asian MK Ministry**

The Asian mission movement has entered a new era. We should rejoice as more and more Asian missionaries are joining in service. As a result, the number of Asian MKs is also increasing. It is anticipated that inter-mission and Western-Asian partnerships will become more important in developing future ministries.

The responsibility of the Asian sending countries to care for the educational needs of their MKs is undeniable. As the number of MKs in

some Asian countries is still low, mission organizations need to work closely together to create suitable educational models for Asian MKs.

On the other hand, in response to the challenges facing MK schools, Western and Asian partnerships become crucial. Although MK school personnel have found difficulties in implementing changes in their schools, we have also found that success cannot be achieved through the efforts of the teaching staff only. In order to understand the unique needs of Asian MKs and provide the best education for them, more communication and cooperation are needed between colleagues from the West and in the Orient.

### Notes

1. Triandis, Harry C., Richard Brislin, C. Harry Hui, "Cross-Cultural Training Across the Individualism-Collectivism Divide," *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Co, 1991, p. 371.
2. Hofstede, Geert., "Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 10, 1986, p. 312.
3. Triandis, Harry C., et al., p. 375.
4. Hofstede, *Intercultural Relations*, p. 307.
5. Hofstede, p. 308.

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## 38.

### *Boarding: Getting Back to Basics*

#### Tom and Wendy Ballentyne

What part does boarding have in the whole missionary endeavor? What is the boarding home parents role in the missionary family? What are the essential ingredients of a positive boarding experience? The answers to these questions can be found in our underlying philosophy of ministry as related to boarding. "Philosophy" is defined as (drum roll) "a system of principles for the conduct of life." It is important to be clear on what our philosophy of boarding is. This is what will determine why and how we do what we do.

#### *A Philosophy of Boarding*

1. The first principle that is crucial is that boarding involves **team parenting**. Boarding home parents are not replacement parents, nor are they substitute parents. Team parents join together in the ongoing nurture of the child—not in competition for control, but in cooperation. Boarding home parents rely on the advice, insight and support of the parents, and vice versa. Those who see boarding home parents as substitutes or replacements usually have the concept of a "glorified baby-sitter" role for them. Maybe we need to throw out the term "boarding home parent" and change it to "team parent" in order to keep the concept clear.

2. The second principle is that of **body ministry**. When my husband and I are on furlough, we share our ministry of team parenting by saying that we are involved in church planting in Mindanao, we help in a factory in China, we are aiding in the translation of the Scripture in about eight different languages, and also have a part in reaching the remote tribal areas of Irian Jaya. After people are duly impressed, we share how, by teaming up with the parenting of missionary kids, we hold ministerial hands with everyone in the Body, from those who are prayer warriors, to those who are hacking through the jungles to share with the unreached. Christ himself stressed how we all have to work together as a Body, not as lone rangers.

3. The final principle is that the purpose of boarding is to help **meet the needs of the missionary family**. The team parents work together with

many others to ensure that the missionary family remains healthy and equipped to do the work they have been called to. They can rest in the confidence that their children are being cared for in a loving environment, and receiving the education they need. They can be assured that the team at the school will do all in their power to be good stewards of what they have been entrusted with.

### ***The Role of Boarding in the Missionary Family***

On the basis of these three principles:

1. The boarding home should not try to mimic the homes that the kids come from. This is not to be a replacement home, but another home. The team parents need to set up their home as they feel comfortable, with the structure and standards that they can live with, without feeling the pressure to “perform” to the dictates of every style of parenting that is represented in the families in their home.

2. The boarding home is not a reform school. Unfortunately, there have been situations where parents have placed a child in boarding in hopes that the school will be able to control what they cannot. The problems usually stem from relational difficulties at home, and because of this, are best dealt with by being together in family counseling. These kids are the ones who would demand the bulk of the team parent’s time, not to mention emotional energy. They are also the ones who have a tendency to drag others down with them. With so many others who need nurturing, it is not wise to have one there at the expense of the others. Boarding is not reserved for the perfect child, but it does work best for those who have open communication with their parents, and who are receptive to the positive influence of others in their lives.

3. The boarding home cannot be used as a type of a hotel—merely to provide food, shelter, and occasional entertainment. It should be a place to nurture relationships which take time and effort to grow—and a willingness to do so.

4. The team parent cannot view the boarding home as a “job” or “duty.” This must be their home and the children must be accepted into their heart as part of their extended family. Attitudes remain in one’s storehouse of memories long after the words are said and forgotten. The

kids will leave with the feeling that they were loved or tolerated, not by the words spoken, but by the spirit in which they were spoken.

5. The boarding home needs to be where both the children and their parents are made to feel wanted and welcome. In our home, we have put a lot of effort into making the parents feel part of our family. The dividends of that are that the parents feel much more at ease leaving their child in our care, having gotten to know us and feeling the warmth that they know their child will also feel. They become supportive partners.

### ***Prerequisites of a Successful Boarding Experience***

Before a parent decides to send their child to boarding school, there are some foundational issues that need to be worked through.

1. If they sense that God is directing them to send their children to boarding school, then they need to also recognize that, because God desires to give us good things, he would not ask them to give their children second best. If this is God’s will for them at this time, then it must also be God’s best. If the parents feel that God is giving their children the lesser of two evils, then the children will have difficulty coming to terms with how God’s love relates to them.

2. The parents also need to be open and willing to join ranks with the team parents in cooperative parenting. They cannot relinquish their responsibilities when they say good-bye. The hugs they give and the nourishment they provide will take on a more creative role! Communication, love, and support are not things which are deleted because of distance, but they take on a new dimension.

3. The most important item to pack in a child’s suitcase is the solidity of family relationships. A child who feels secure in the knowledge that he is loved unconditionally by Mom and Dad will feel secure to be open to other relationships. There will always be pain in separation, but what is done with that pain is crucial. It can strengthen the bonds, or bring bitterness. The parents pattern how this is dealt with. They are often the ones who feel the pain even more intensely—they are the ones who look at the empty space at the table and the unslept-in bed. They need to express that pain, not in terms of how many tears are shed, but in how interested they are in everything that the child is experiencing.

It cannot be said often enough, that *communication* is absolutely essential for all concerned.

### ***The Payoffs of a Healthy Boarding Experience***

Having been through many years of boarding as a child and now as a team parent, there are recurring themes in this whole “benefits” department.

1. One of the big payoffs is a *strengthening of family bonds*. We have seen over and over again the depth of appreciation and loyalty to family ties that is sweetened with the pain of separation. Feelings and thoughts are expressed that are often put off until later, or left unsaid. One parent thanked us as the team parents for being “the bad guys” for them and allowing their family to just enjoy the good times together! It’s true that at school children work through the mundane, and the daily gripes and struggles. They are only with their parents for a short time and they want to make the most of it so they leave the fighting for school!

2. The children *develop very deep relationships* in the boarding home. They become like family to each other because they eat, sleep, study, and relax together. They learn both how to share themselves with others, and also how to deal with conflict resolution. The team parents fulfill a very significant role in modeling a Godly marriage and response to life. Often, apart from the parents themselves, the team parents have had the most impact on how the children define husband/wife relationships.

3. There are some situations where boarding has *exposed some problems* in a family. This is not an easy thing to deal with as the family can feel very vulnerable and defensive. Discovering a tumor is traumatic, and surgery involves considerable pain, but it is also essential for healing. The family that is open to “undergo treatment” will be able to begin the healing process.

4. A *greater reliance on God* has often resulted from being away from home. Children’s growth must be more personally motivated. In a Christian school it is very easy to “look” right, and “talk” right, without having any personal convictions. The persecution one receives comes from those who aren’t comfortable with any who would jump off the

fence they are all sitting on, and strive to shake them out of their comfort zone.

5. One invaluable payoff that I personally received from my experience in boarding was a conviction about what makes a healthy family. The three ties that entwine with each other to make an unbreakable bond are *love, communication, and support*. These are not restricted to geographical closeness. To throw the concept of “boarding” out because there are some who have suffered is as logical as throwing out the concept of “family” because there are also some who have suffered because of theirs. There will always be those who abuse their responsibilities, whether in the home or in the boarding system. It is better, says the Lord, that a millstone be tied around their necks and they be thrown into the sea. However, over and over, God has blessed the home that strives to embrace those within it with the unconditional love which God has patterned. He can bless this home wherever it is found.

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## 39.

***Preparing Children for Boarding School*****Nick and Dora Pauls**

Remember that going to boarding school is a ***major transition***—for the child and the family. Learn all you can about the skills needed to handle other transitions in life successfully and seek to apply them when facing the transition to boarding school.

Be sensitive to the ***individual needs*** of your children. Children are not all ready at the same age to face separation from parents. If one of your children seems particularly insecure and fearful of the separation, investigate other options for that child's education to allow for additional maturity. A year or two delay may prevent many years of difficulty later.

Get as much ***information about the boarding school*** as possible before sending your children. Find out about its purpose, philosophy, discipline, rules, and the expectations, privileges, and restrictions for you as parents. If you don't understand something, seek clarification from appropriate sources.

If at all possible, ***visit the boarding school and meet the boarding home parents*** with your children before you have to leave them there. This will give you, as a family, an opportunity to talk specifically about what it might be like for your children to go there, and they will be able to go to a place that is at least somewhat familiar. You as parents will also be able to visualize your children in their setting when they are away from you. All of these things make it easier to maintain a sense of being "connected" even when you are physically separated.

Talk about the boarding school experience well in advance. Be realistic about what will be enjoyable and what will probably be difficult. ***Express your feelings*** honestly, and encourage your children to do so as well, without trying to talk them out of feeling the way they do or telling them they shouldn't feel a certain way.

When your children go to boarding school, allow them to take along some ***reminders of home*** that are meaningful to them—family pictures, favorite toys or books, pictures, or a special pillow or blanket.

Provide your children with some ***tangible reminder of your love*** to take along to the boarding school. Affirm your love to them and be sure they understand—and feel—that you are not sending them away because they are a bother to you or keep you from doing things that are more important to you than they are.

Openly ***communicate that you will miss your children*** and that, because of your deep love for them, you too feel emotional pain in being separated from them. In years past, some parents have tried to hide their feelings from their children, thinking that to show emotions and tears when saying good-bye would make it harder for their children—only to find out later that the children interpreted that to mean their parents weren't sad to see them leave and so probably didn't love them very much.

Discuss and ***make provision for ways to keep in touch*** while your children are away at school. Keep them informed about what you are doing. Share prayer requests and answers with them. Research indicates MKs who feel in some way involved in their parents' ministry, either directly or through information and prayer, fare better as adults than those who don't feel involved in any way.

Encourage ***regular and honest communication*** from your children. Show them you are interested in the events, relationships, struggles, joys, accomplishments, and failures of their lives. Respond to their communication in a positive way without criticism.

When you become aware that your child is struggling or having discipline problems, seek to ***get as much information as possible*** before taking any drastic action. Listen carefully to your child's side of the story along with the children's home parent's or teacher's side. If possible, go to the boarding home so you can deal with the issue in person with the purpose of seeking to do what is best for your child and to help him or her become a better person as a result of any action taken. Find ways of affirming your love to your child even when his or her behavior is unacceptable.

If at all possible, ***get to know the "significant others"*** who will be part of your children's lives while they are at boarding school.

Get to know the **boarding home parents** and let them get to know you. A mutual relationship of trust and appreciation for each other will help you work together to help your children grow and mature into healthy, wholesome adults and to point them to a personal relationship with the Lord. Let them know of some of the **special likes and dislikes** of your children. If your children like some special ethnic food, ask to teach the children's home parents how to prepare it (even provide the ingredients if they are unusual) so they can make it for your children for some special occasion like a birthday.

Try to meet the **teachers** who will be teaching your children. Tell them of any special needs or interests your children have. Let them know of any experiences your children have had that may affect their ability to concentrate on school work, so the teacher can be sensitive to them.

Get acquainted with **classmates and friends** of your children. This will make it easier for you to understand your children's communication about their peers.

Attend the **church or fellowship** your children will attend. Meet and introduce your children to their Sunday school teacher or youth sponsor, so they will feel there is a familiar face in the crowd. It will help make church attendance less frightening.

If a **family of the same ethnic origin** is in the area where your children will be attending boarding school, perhaps they would be willing to be someone with whom your children can speak their own language, eat familiar foods, etc.

Involve your children in planning how to spend their **school vacation** time. Spend time together doing some special family things. During extended time periods at home, it is also a good idea to let your children see you involved in the daily routine of your ministry and have them participate as appropriate, so they can envision and understand what you are doing when they are away from you.

While your children are at home, develop spontaneous, natural ways to **talk about things you want to affirm and build** in your children, such as:

- extended family relationships (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins), understanding and appreciation for home country culture, as

well as discernment about the positive and negative aspects of that culture

- Christian values and beliefs
- personal relationship with the Lord
- the ministry to which God has called your family and how each individual family member contributes to it
- appreciation/respect for the host culture (or any person or group whose lifestyle is different from your own)
- discernment in evaluating those aspects of the host culture (or any other individual or group whose lifestyle is different from your own) that are in line with your family and Christian values and those that are not

Build your children's confidence in **taking responsibility and making decisions** that are in agreement with internal values and convictions, so they will not be as easily influenced by external pressures to participate in questionable behavior when they are away from home.

Most importantly, build and nurture **strong and loving relationships** within the family long before you face the transition to boarding school. The confidence that Mom and Dad love each other and their children regardless of circumstances, performance, achievement, and physical separation will help provide stability and security in the midst of transition and change, including the transition to boarding school.

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## 40.

## *Developing Christian Curriculum: A Complex Task*

**Diane Lilleberg**

“Why doesn’t someone just take some time, dig in, solve the problem, and get the Christian curriculum job done?”

This question was posed near the end of a presentation I made recently. The participant who raised it had become aware of cultural and denominational bias in some of the Christian curriculum available—issues which are magnified in an overseas situation.

The complexity of the Christian curriculum task is difficult to describe adequately. How can we write curriculum that can be “light” and “salt” to young minds and those teaching them, whether they agree with our world view or not? People, expertise, finances, and widely differing views of what “Christian education” means are only the beginning of what needs to be considered. One can easily bias or trivialize such an auspicious project as directing children to think biblically and to use the Word of God as a tool to test oneself, rather than an additional subject on which to be tested.

Such a tool is something to be reached for and used as students and teachers alike struggle with questions and form a growing world view that can be communicated with compassion. Such a world view encourages the ownership of one’s faith in an amazing God who loves individually, in an awe-inspiring world we are to care for as it supports our lives, and with personal confidence that God has a purpose for each of us. Through that purpose, we have the opportunity of returning love to God through worship and loving service.

Whenever God has blessed us with sufficient vision, expertise, wisdom, finances, and personnel, CHED Family Services has participated in curriculum tasks. Whether that task involved reviewing available materials, both Christian and secular, or developing our own, we have quickly realized we are but “beginning learners” in this area.

Our recent development efforts have concentrated on two areas. The first is early grade “packaging” to help parents become comfortable with

the teaching role they often assume in isolated locations. A second, more complex effort has been writing themes, or units, for social studies (history, geography, and so on).

### *Multicultural Social Studies*

This is the subject area most difficult to cover suitably for the students we serve. We are unaware of anything currently published that allows children from different countries (who live in and are familiar with several other cultures not tied to their birth heritage) to study social studies together. We also wanted theme activities to challenge children and to enrich and encourage our missionary families in their ministry to one another and to the world.

The following is a glimpse of what a developmental task involves.

Before actually beginning, countless hours of foundational work must take place:

- background research to study the subject itself
- exploration of what the Bible really says about it
- learning what national education council experts of the discipline consider important for children to learn
- identifying concepts (rather than specific factual content) that illustrate the “meat” of the subject. This allows for alternate content students might need in preparation for different home-country educational systems.

### *Economics: An Example*

A theme focusing on the topic of economics proved more difficult than most even though the key economic concept of scarcity seemed to be universally important to economists. Christian curriculum presented it similarly to secular curriculum, with an added warning that care be taken because Scripture does not present scarcity as necessarily a negative.

The economic concept of scarcity has two interrelated parts:

- people have unlimited wants
- resources available to provide those wants are limited

So—like most parents tell children, most groups tell members, and most societies tell citizens—we can't have everything we want. We have to make choices.

That sounds simple enough.

But it isn't simple at all. What a challenge to try to word economic concepts in a way that reflects biblical truth and avoids cultural bias! People may have unlimited wants, but what they want varies with personal and cultural values, as well as with what they expect or even feel entitled to from their historic standard of living.

As we looked for a way to help students understand the complexity of choices people make in searching for what they desire and in regarding and using the resources available to them, we had the privilege of access to God's Word as a guiding resource. We realized anew the power and practicality of its message—this treasure so available to us.

*Trading Treasures* . . . as that potential title for this theme came to mind one evening, I began reflecting on the "treasures" my family had to offer and on the ones being returned to us. The next morning my mind awoke singing, "Count your treasures, name them one by one . . ." Trading a treasure of time to consider and attach value to the resources available to me and my family proved more than worthwhile. It left me satisfied.

"An unlimited desire for satisfaction" is how we refined our definition of *unlimited wants*. One can be satisfied while basic needs are difficult to meet. On the other hand, one can have every material want met and still be unsatisfied. And resources (those treasures available to help satisfy our needs and wants) are limited. We need to invest our treasure wisely. Often it is through struggling with what we first determine to be too little that we discover the availability of God's unlimited resources. Instead of hoping to be more capable, we may find ourselves capable of hoping—a treasure that deeply satisfies.

### ***Finished or Just Beginning?***

Are we finished with our Christian curriculum task? No, we are only ready to begin. Now we know what we need to look for in our own lives—growth in our ability to define satisfaction, and learning to

recognize and appreciate the gift of resources. We can only begin to understand the responsibility and complexity tied to knowing there are no costless choices in using shared treasure. What model do our students observe in decisions being made regarding the wise use of resources? Do these decisions consider the common good and what might be differently satisfying to the different people affected by our decisions, both now and in the future?

Perhaps now we are at last ready for a syllabus and for ideas that will help students demonstrate something new they have learned and will help them grow up knowing each one can make a real difference to the world.

### ***Treasure in Ministry***

My prayer as we continue to develop this and other themes is that God will use them to expand knowledge, promote understanding and appreciation, impact lifelong choices, strengthen relationships, and stimulate faith while at the same time fostering the joy of learning for the students, parents, and educators who use them. The confidence that this prayer is being answered in some small way is a truly satisfying reward for this complex curriculum development task.

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## 41. *Choosing a Curriculum*

**Diane Lilleberg**

### *“Christian” or “Secular” Curriculum?*

There are two ways Christian families typically look at the curriculum issue of choosing between a presentation from a Christian perspective or from a secular perspective.

One perspective includes a desire to protect children from the influence of secular world views, especially those including humanism or evolution. This may reflect a belief that children accept as truth what is written or stated. It may also reflect a concern that evaluating the truth of a secular presentation will imply that the truth of God’s Word is also open for evaluation. The potential of exposure to secular world views is seen as a danger that can seriously compromise the child’s adherence to Christian beliefs and values held by the parents.

The other perspective includes the desire to make students aware that all presentations are biased with a given world view and need to be evaluated in light of personal faith and what you regard as truth. It is argued that a protective approach encourages children to accept as truth all material presented. Students may then be left without necessary skills to evaluate alternative views and to communicate sympathetically outside a Christian culture. Presentation of secular curriculum in a setting that model a Christian response is viewed as a unique opportunity to give students skill in recognizing, evaluating, and sympathetically responding to other world views.

Both perspectives share the belief that God’s Word is the final authority in determining truth. One approach is to provide curriculum containing material that has examined human teachings and has explicitly rejected (by omission or contradiction) any statements contrary to biblical principles. The other approach is to provide students with practical experience in examining human teachings and rejecting presentations of truth that contradict their faith and adherence to the truth of God’s Word.

In summary, the following key questions should be considered in examining the issue of curriculum presentation:

**If a secular world view** is presented as truth, do students accept that world view without evaluating it?

**Does presentation** of a secular world view compromise a belief in biblical truth?

**Does encouraging evaluation** of world views compromise adherence to the Bible as a standard of truth that should not be evaluated?

**Does the fact that** a world view is published as “Christian” encourage acceptance of that view without evaluating the cultural and interpretive elements in it?

**Does protective presentation** of a Christian world view leave students vulnerable when later presented with other world views or when asked to defend that view?

**Does the consistent presentation** of one particular Christian world view as truth leave students insensitive to alternative Christian world views or compromise their ability to communicate God’s truth in other cultures?

### *Seeking a Balance*

Either perspective can lend balance to the other. The key is for students to be given the exposure and encouragement necessary to develop skills in evaluating and responding to the world around them. The purpose in developing these skills is both to encourage sympathetic responses in a multicultural world and to allow student ownership of a personal world view as it relates to personal faith and biblical truth.

### *Curriculum Selection*

How can I decide what curriculum program is best?

Here are some questions you should ask yourself as you consider available curriculum programs. The questions are formulated for parents who are looking for curriculum for home teaching, but they are also applicable in classroom settings.

**Do I want a “Christian” curriculum or a secular curriculum?**

- Is the curriculum educationally sound?

- Is it an appropriate fit in other ways? (see other questions below)
- Will this curriculum encourage sympathy to other cultures and other world views, including other Christian world views?
- Does this curriculum limit my opportunity to model Christian values?
- Am I comfortable modeling an evaluation of a Christian world view?

### ***Correspondence Questions***

- Can I purchase part of a package?
- Am I allowed to reuse it for younger children?
- What type and how many textbooks are used and what are the publishing dates?
- How reliable is the ordering and/or advisement service?
- What experiences have others had with the program?
- What scheduling helps are provided with the curriculum?
- Will such helps be an advantage for me?
- Will such helps be an advantage for my child? In what way?
- Will I look at scheduling helps as “suggested,” or will such helps put additional pressure on me (and, as a result, on my child)?
- Are options available for accelerating the schedule?

### ***What kind of helps are included for the teacher?***

- Are they educationally sound?
- Will they encourage my educational values for my children?
- How many options are provided?
- Is the amount of structure appropriate to my background and teaching style?
- Do the helps provide suggestions for dealing with children who need time and/or children who need challenge?

### ***What kind of educational outcomes are expected?***

- Written assignments or compositions?
- Fill-in-the-blanks or other short-answer?

- Facts or concepts?
- Processes or problem-solving?

### ***Are the student assignments appropriate?***

- Are tasks required of students developmentally appropriate?
- Is there task variety in the student assignments?
- Is there a variety in levels of thought required in accomplishing the assigned tasks?
- What level of creativity in product or creativity in thought is encouraged and/or allowed?

### ***Additional Questions***

- What is the potential for student independence?
- What fits my child’s personality and learning style?
- What fits my personality and style?
- What will motivate my child?
- What will motivate me?

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## 42.

## *A Framework for Culturally Sensitive Curriculum*

**Richard J. Edlin**

The following is a brief summary of a process of designing a curriculum which is culturally sensitive. For a detailed discussion of curriculum design, see Chapter 6 of *Christian Philosophy of Education* by Richard Edlin (Northport Alabama: Vision Press, 1994).

### *1. Christian Approach to Education: No Neutrality*

We start by recognizing the common bond that teachers have in Christ; a recognition of the religious nature of the task that any curriculum developers are involved in; and with an acceptance of our calling to prepare material for our schools that leads to the worship and service of God the Creator, and not worship of the creature or creation. For example, Paul's stirring sermon in Athens, recorded in Acts 17, shows us that all people are religious—that we are all worshipers because God has made us that way. Paul reminds us that most people have been deceived in this worship, however, and they worship and serve the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25).

We cannot choose whether to worship or not, but what we *can* choose is the object of our worship. In our educational task, we must actively choose to worship and serve the Lord, for there is no neutrality.

This approach to curriculum development converts what could be a cultural hurdle in an international school into an exciting advantage. Our school programs should not be determined by the culture of the administrator or the most vocal group of teachers. The basic reality and authority in the missionary school is that we are united in Christ and accordingly recognize a corporate submission to Christ's Word as the guide for all of life, including education. So we build our curriculum not on what is done in America or England or New Zealand, but upon biblical principles as they apply to the educational task universally. We then can incorporate the diversity of cultural and educational perspectives into the structure of our curriculum.

### *2. Definitions*

Even the way we frame our definitions reflects our beliefs and impacts our curriculum. For example, the definition of social studies for the Christian will be different from that for the non-Christian. The non-Christian may define social studies as “the body of knowledge that relates to man as a member of society...or any systemized human institution” (Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary). A Christian curriculum statement will emphasize the concept of a God-centeredness and human stewardship, so that the definition of social studies might be “the study of people in community and relationships in particular space and time settings, functioning as stewards of the cultural mandate given by God.”

### *3. Christian Distinctives*

At this point we need to identify the key concepts that Christians believe about the curriculum area under discussion, as well as affirming our commitment to a culturally sensitive understanding and application of these beliefs.

### *4. The Students*

This is the heart of cultural sensitivity in our MK schools. The first three steps of this model focus on the fundamental Christian basis of our curriculum. Now the cultural sensitivity question comes to the fore. We cannot allow factors such as textbooks or the teacher's background to replace this step in the curriculum development process. We need a resource base that helps our teachers know where the children in their classes come from, where they are now, and where they will be going. These questions need to be considered individually in the four dimensions of culture, spiritual life, academics, and social patterns. We need to get to know our children very well in our MK school classrooms!

### *5. Aims and Objectives: Curriculum Content and Skills*

*“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that*

*comes through Jesus Christ...to the glory and praise of God”  
(Philippians 1:9-11)*

Thus Paul summarized our aims and objectives for our students. As we develop these aims and objectives in a culturally sensitive way, it will become obvious that it is very difficult—and indeed dangerous—to be too prescriptive in terms of content. This is because in many subjects a content pattern is appropriate for children from one culture but inappropriate for the others.

Care is also needed in setting aims and objectives in terms of behavior and skills. The teacher in the culturally sensitive classroom will seek to achieve these skills and behavioral goals in a wide range of content situations that reflect the statements in the curriculum under subject 1–4.

### **6. Resources**

This is a most important area of concern. The old approach of adopting a package curriculum whereby the authors shape the nature of the classroom work is obviously completely unsuitable. A curriculum package approach reduces teachers to being mere technicians who implement others’ instructions, and prescriptive text and workbook packages are responsive only to the home country culture for which they were written.

Teachers in a culturally sensitive classroom will use traditional textbooks as one resource among many. The teacher will use a wide variety of resources from different backgrounds in order to meet the needs and experiences of the students. The teacher will have the freedom and joy (and, initially, the trepidation) of designing and implementing programs, and will really be able to *teach*, shaping the nature of the educational task in the classroom for the benefit of the students.

### **7. Curriculum Content**

Only at this point can we develop a content base for our curriculum, with the awareness that this base may change from year to year as the cultural composition of our student body changes. Needs will change as missionaries from one culture leave and others from another culture

arrive. With the application of some creative energy, teachers are able to meet the externally imposed content requirements that many national educational systems demand for entrance into their higher education programs.

### **8. The Classroom**

If the elements of the above model are followed, then teachers can be confident that their classrooms will be exciting and fulfilling places for the whole school and will meet the needs of their students. Students will be challenged with the Lordship of Christ as they learn about the world and their places and tasks in it, both in the host culture where they are living and in the various places they will go when they leave. What more could a teacher ask for?

Adapted, with minor editing, by permission of *World Report*, January/February 1992.

## 43.

*Pre-Field Orientation***Philip M. Renicks**

Staffing issues are some of the most pressing concerns for the MK school administrator. Those concerns include recruiting, selection, and induction—all of which are complicated by unexpected resignations of quality staff.

Why do those who are making a positive contribution in the classroom sometimes abruptly leave, short-circuiting their missionary teaching careers? A number of researchers have identified the reasons as a mismatch of expectations which prevents a good adjustment to the host country culture, and difficulty feeling accepted in the mission subculture.

Other research has indicated that pre-departure orientation greatly enhances the successful adaptation of a person who is new to cross-cultural life and work.

New MK caregivers often struggle to survive and communicate, and may express negative thoughts about the new culture while longing for home. These responses to the cross-cultural setting produce dissonance and insecurity for the MK. MKs need adults who understand both worlds, helping them to respond to the double challenge of growing up in and living between two worlds.

The ability of new boarding home parents, teachers, and administrators to understand the host culture and MKs (who exhibit many of the host culture's characteristics) increases their ability to carry out the intended task: the education, development and nurture of MKs. When MK caregivers have developed healthy perspectives, they have far more satisfaction living cross-culturally, and are able to concentrate on their work assignments.

This permits the MK caregiver to appropriately use his or her God-given abilities, gifts and experiences. The way MK caregivers relate to MKs is a key factor in the immediate and long-term success or failure of missionary families. It also makes a significant impact on the lifelong vocational and spiritual choices of individual MKs.

Each year, many new teachers and caregivers take their places in MK schools. Most of these new workers assume that MKs are identical

to their counterparts in their parents' homeland. They are not aware of the impact of the cross-cultural experience on the MK. The majority of these new MK caregivers have limited or no cross-cultural experience and minimal contact with missions in general. These issues raise some critical questions about the ongoing effectiveness of the MK schools.

With increasing numbers of two-thirds world missionaries, MK schools need to respond to the developmental and educational needs of a multicultural student body. To meet these needs, much more than the familiar traditional Western approach is needed. This provides yet more complexity for the orientation of administrators and teachers who will serve in the MK school.

MK caregivers are often viewed as support staff for core missionaries such as evangelists and church planters. By necessity, the standard orientation provided by the mission emphasizes organizational issues related to evangelism and church/mission relationships, helping the core missionary, but leaving MK caregivers with little direction or understanding of their vital role and specialized ministry.

It is within the context of these issues that a pre-departure training program was created by a consortium of trainers from ACSI (the Association of Christian Schools International), Interaction, Inc., and Missionary Training International.

This specialized two-week program integrates the professional issues of MK care with the cultural and interpersonal realities of cross-cultural service. This is more complex than it may appear on the surface. The new MK caregiver is required to enter at least three foreign cultures: the host country culture, the mission subculture, and the school subculture. This multiple entry requires a mastery of entry skills.

The pre-field orientation program assumes that teacher participants have training and experience as professionals in the subject area of their teaching assignment. Therefore, the orientation program focuses on the interplay of cultural, interpersonal, and professional issues for both teachers and boarding parents entering the multicultural MK school context.

The consortium's program is designed to introduce MK caregivers to basic skills and attitudes which will help them to be effective in their

future cross-cultural environment. It is not intended to provide culture-specific information, that can only be acquired through observation and experience in a field setting. Pre-field orientation is a bridge to the on-site orientation and development of MK caregivers as members of the MK school community, and as active participants in the cross-cultural community.

Participants in MK-PFO are given an opportunity to:

- Assess, clarify, and refine interpersonal skills and attitudes that will enhance their future ministry with the children of missionaries.
- Examine their experience and educational background in relation to the unique context of the multicultural MK school, and gain insight for personal adaptation.
- Identify significant characteristics of MKs, MK schools, missionaries and their families, the missionary community, and the multinational, international community.
- Examine and discuss job-specific issues for teachers and boarding home parents in multicultural MK schools.
- Understand the basics of cultural differences and effective cultural entry, and develop a personal entry posture which will enhance their entry into a cross-cultural context and increase their competence as school and support staff.
- Value the importance of integrating their biblical knowledge and personal faith into daily life and ministry within the multicultural MK school setting.

These pre-field orientation programs (PFO) have been held annually since 1986, and new personnel from dozens of missions have participated. Some missions make the PFO experience a requirement for new MK caregivers and view it as a vital and complementary program to their own pre-field programs.

PFO experiences of staff at Morrison Academy in Taiwan were reported in the Fall 1996 issue of their newsletter, *Spectrum*. Some of the teachers attended the pre-field orientation with their children, who were enrolled in age-appropriate classes, went on field trips, viewed videos, and learned about their destination countries. Adults engaged in lectures, personality testing, parenting classes, journaling, panels, advisor

interviews, job-alike sessions, small-group Bible studies, and culture simulation games.

One teacher commented, "It helps people feel... they are worthy of being trained, professionally and personally. It speaks clearly of a commitment of the school to excellence."

Gregory Meeks, Superintendent of Morrison Academy, observed,

"An on-field orientation without the benefit of a pre-field orientation can be compared to changing a flat tire while you are driving down the road. It makes more sense to change the flat before you begin your journey. Once you are on the road there are road signs and other traffic to watch.

"Pre-field orientation provides participants with an awareness of the make-up and needs of Mks and TCKs, and helps educate staff in the important role that they play in the overall missionary endeavor. It gives new staff basic cross-cultural skills and an understanding of culture shock.

"PFO provides an opportunity, while the participants are still in a familiar setting, to explore new learnings which will help make them successful in their new role. It takes a little bit of time to check your tires before taking off on a long journey, but it is much easier to change a flat tire while you are sitting still than while you are driving down the road!"

Adapted, with minor editing, by permission from *World Report*, January/February 1992, and *Spectrum*, Fall 1996.

## 44.

*On-Site Orientation Programs***Bonnie McGill**

An adequate orientation program can make a significant difference in the acculturation of new personnel overseas. There is now a growing body of evidence that shows it also increases the longevity of MK school personnel. Recent research by David Wilcox on factors affecting staff longevity identified factors which schools can impact (the degree of commitment, job satisfaction, and cultural adjustment, as well as the role of the spouse and his or her level of satisfaction) and those which they cannot impact (age, marital status, etc.). For example, a clearly articulated vision statement may promote a greater sense of commitment. Sensitivity by an administrator may improve a staff member's level of job satisfaction. The level of pre-field training as well as the orientation program provided on the field impact the level of acculturation.

*What's Important in Orientation?*

Many cross-cultural orientation programs provided by MK schools focus only on the "nuts and bolts" of the school's operation, day-to-day living, and specific cultural information. While research shows that dealing with these issues is definitely helpful and needed, it also clearly shows that the highest priority should be given to dealing with attitudes. Knowing the logistics of living in the new country and learning about the norms of that new culture are important, but knowledge without proper attitudes will not ensure successful cross-cultural adjustment. On the other hand, a newcomer with proper attitudes but inadequate information will usually become successful. Therefore, any orientation program which fails to address attitudes is neglecting the single most critical element for the success of new personnel.

*Attitudes Matter*

Here are some attitudes we should address during orientation: 1) Becoming and remaining a learner, rather than having an air of subtle superiority. "I have so much to learn from the people of this country,"

instead of "I have so much to teach these people;" 2) Developing a sense of adventure about living in a foreign culture rather than focusing on the negatives. "What a challenge to learn to live without..." instead of "This country doesn't even have...!"; 3) Basing confidence on prior experience rather than on pride. "I've been an outsider in new situations before and God helped me to make it. I'm sure he will help me adapt here also," instead of "This won't be hard; I'm adaptable."

*What Promotes Longevity?*

Two factors, which are often overlooked, promote longevity and should be given special attention: the person's expectations, and the affective filters through which each person has learned to view life. These filters may be largely unknown and are best understood through a proper perspective of one's own past and personality.

The importance of language acquisition to acculturation, job satisfaction, and longevity has been well documented for traditional missionaries. They need to be fluent to teach in seminaries and to preach as they plant churches. However, research on the relationship between language and increased longevity for foreigners who work with expatriates is nonexistent. It is obvious that there are some major differences between the missionary who uses a second language in a daily ministry and a teacher who uses English to teach missionaries' children. However, it does seem clear that a certain degree of proficiency in the language is also necessary for the new faculty member as well. Without some language, culture shock is greatly prolonged and acculturation is incomplete. In addition, lack of language skills makes it more natural for someone to build a life completely around the work of the school, and longevity is often thrown out the window.

During orientation, language learning needs to be thoroughly discussed, and the importance of gaining proficiency emphasized. Based on our past experience, the school's administration needs to make a decision about this. Once the minimum level of language proficiency has been determined, that expectation should be clearly communicated to new staff and needs to be required or provided.

Second, some type of organized follow up is imperative for organizations that want to ensure successful cross-cultural transition for their people. This can be done in two ways. First, create scheduled times for purposeful listening. Small irritants often grow into insurmountable problems because no one took the time to truly listen. Second, help the newcomer to become accountable to someone. This should include checking on success in cultural contacts as well as encouragement.

### ***Scheduling Orientation Activities***

Orientation should begin as soon as newcomers arrive in the country. However, often by the time new faculty members arrive, it is harder to interest them in important aspects of an orientation program. This is not because they disagree with the importance of the attitudinal issues, but because they're emotionally overloaded and their felt needs are more pressing. "How can I be safe here? How can I provide for my family? How will I meet our personal needs?" These are the questions that are uppermost in their minds.

Ideally, dealing with attitudes, along with growth in understanding one's personality and how one is likely to react to the stress of transition and cultural adaptation, is best done in the country of origin before moving overseas. When this cannot be done on a pre-field basis, newcomers should be given time and help to get settled and find their way around before asking them to take several days to focus on issues which are crucial to their long-term adjustment.

It is essential to show the newcomer around and provide for his basic needs during the first few days. On the other hand, at this stage it is easy to provide more information than anyone can assimilate. It is also possible to do too much for newcomers for too long. If new staff members come to see the school as the source of all help, an attitude of dependence can be fostered. This prevents or slows down the successful acculturation of new staff members and their families. They may begin to feel that the school "owes" them whatever they need. One goal of this phase of the orientation process is to help newcomers to know where to go for help rather than to provide all the help. After a few days of help in getting settled, new faculty members and their families can convene for meetings covering the rest of the orientation material.

### ***Who Is Overlooked in the Orientation Process?***

According to Wilcox's research, singles and work-at-home spouses have an extra need for good orientation and follow-up. This is also true for teachers who do not come out through a mission board. Usually they have not gone through psychological testing and have not received any pre-field orientation programs which most missions require. Singles, people who have not come through a mission organization, and work-at-home spouses also often lack the accountability and encouragement structures that are helpful to good adjustment. A well-designed orientation program can begin to develop these support structures.

After the school year has started, the work-at-home spouse is often cut off from most forms of social contact. Due to language and transportation difficulties, they are often left with an overwhelming sense of isolation. In this vacuum, it is hard to keep a positive attitude toward the host country, the school, one's fellow expatriates, or life in general. If a spouse is not given some extra attention, it is unlikely that longevity at the school will be a part of this new family's future. Singles often have this same sense of isolation during their free time, as do teachers without close mission ties. Long after the formal orientation is finished, these people continue to have needs. Addressing these needs makes a great deal of difference in people's attitudes and thereby increases staff retention.

A good orientation program takes time—at least several days—and should not be hurried. It should include helping newcomers 1) find their way around, 2) acquire proper attitudes, 3) learn about the new culture and organizational expectations, and 4) provide for formalized follow-up. Staff members who have had an adequate orientation program will usually adapt sooner and better than they would have without it. This gives them a better start toward successful cross-cultural living which in turn will increase staff retention rate for the school.

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## 45.

*Staff Relationships That Work***Roger H. Luce**

In the high intensity stress of ministry overseas, good interpersonal relationships can be the key to maintaining equilibrium for the frazzled faculty at an MK school. Those who take time to build rich friendships that encourage one another in ministry, support one another in adversity, and edify one another in love, have invested in an antidote to burnout and can effectively model Christlikeness to students and the national community. In order to improve relationships among staff and prepare individuals to practice preventive maintenance in interpersonal relationships, it is important to discover patterns and develop techniques that will promote community building within the staff. These Christ-honoring relationships can then serve as an example for students and the wider community.

*Frazzled Faculty or Fulfilling Fellowship?*

Tom and Debbi had been on the field almost a full term. They had weathered language school, first encounters with cockroaches and power outages. They had arrived enthusiastic and energetic. Tom taught and loved it, Debbi was enjoying her ministry with Tom and had several opportunities to work in the community teaching ESL classes and volunteering in the local clinic. Tom was helping to coach in basketball and soccer, was advisor to the yearbook, and together they sponsored a class of tenth graders. They finished their term and did not return.

Kathy was a single person who had grown up on the mission field, and when her parents were forced to leave their country of service, she wanted to serve MKs in a Latin American country. After college, she taught Spanish and English in an MK boarding school, and developed a strong rapport with students, being frequently sought out for counsel. She was involved in student government, social activities with the kids, and the local church. After a third term, she left the field disillusioned.

Bill and Sharon had raised their kids on the field as they had served in a variety of capacities at the MK school. Starting as a teacher, he had filled in as Assistant Principal and Principal for two or three years. He

was respected on the field and had served on the Field Council and as bookkeeper for the school and the field. Sharon was an effective soul winner, and led Bible studies among the staff local and women. Their kids were leaders in the school, both academically and spiritually. They left when their middle child graduated, and only years later shared the real reason for their move.

These composites are true to life, and too typical, because each one left the field because of struggles in relationships. Tom and Debbi felt isolated; they couldn't find their "niche." They had no kids and didn't fit with the families; they were married and didn't fit with the singles; they were relatively new so didn't often get called on for leadership responsibilities; they felt unappreciated and unloved. Kathy felt rejected by staff who seemed jealous of her close relationships with students. "Because she could help them adjust to the language and culture better," Kathy was often asked to share an apartment with the newly arrived single women on staff, so she moved and changed roommates repeatedly. Bill and Sharon had burned out trying to referee relationship struggles among fractious staff, and deal with other staff's negative evaluations of their parenting style.

The point is that good staff relationships not only make work more enjoyable, but they are essential to the long-term viability of staff and thus the school.

Art and Sara had come to the field as young parents of three active boys. Paul and Kristie, whom they met at language school, had a son and daughter right in between Art and Sara's three. As they bonded through the common struggles of language school, they found their diverse backgrounds held many common threads. The gals were both nurses; the guys loved to talk philosophy into the wee hours. One family went to the MK school and the other to the far end of the country. Even though they were assigned to different areas of the country, when annual conference came, their friendship took up right where it had left off. They vacationed together and their eldest children went to college together. When one couple went through protracted stress in their ministry, the other was a safe haven to share feelings and frustrations. When the other couple lost two parents within two months, the first ones they turned to were their closest friends. They consistently say of each other, "They are closer than

any of our family or friends from the homeland. We have shared so much, of good times and bad. We have been enriched by working together with them.” Both couples have seen the Lord use their struggles to promote growth and expand their ministries.

Few factors have a greater effect on the longevity, effectiveness, and overall job satisfaction of missionaries than the quality of interpersonal relationships among co-workers.

### ***Some Stressors that Affect Relationships***

Some stressors are due primarily to the unique situation of a small cultural enclave set in an unfamiliar host culture. Others stem from the fact that many MK schools are short staffed and have a high turnover rate, and all relate back to the fact that we are all imperfect specimens of a fallen humanity. As administrators we should learn to recognize and seek to eliminate or minimize these stressors, or even turn them to our advantage.

#### **Relationship Stressors**

- burnout
- time crunch interference with spiritual nurture or relationships
- unrealistic expectations; surprises when reality is different from expectations
- low level but constant culture stress; homesickness
- inappropriate job comparisons
- over familiarity due to close community
- women’s issues (ministry role, finding a niche, friendships, family priorities, PMS, menopause)
- singles issues (ministry role, housemates, friendships, implications of friendships with opposite-sex staff, social acceptance among marrieds)
- gossip, cliques
- lack of forgiveness, bitterness, jealousy
- legalistic or libertine attitudes

The fact that staff at an MK school is a very tightly knit community can become a significant relationship enhancer. As staff members share their experiences and feelings and consciously work together toward shared commitments and goals, they build bridges of common bonds. When people freely and often express their appreciation and friendship to one another, and when they devote quality and quantity time to relationship building, a basis for mutual trust and edification becomes apparent. Barnabas and Paul established a successful mentor-protégé pattern in the lives of John-Mark and Timothy, which we would do well to emulate in the missions community. Barnabas’ persistent faith in John-Mark and his willingness to go out on a limb for a missionary who had quit after not even a full term, is an example and a challenge to us in following through on the mentoring relationship.

Another tool for enhancing relationships is the idea of accountability partnerships. These have been very successful in helping individuals attain their God-given potential, and providing stability when adversity comes to challenge our faith or our calling to the ministry of MK education.

Even a successful ministry as a missionary will not fulfill our needs. God has created us so that only he can satisfy our deepest needs when we are in right relationship to him. He is a relational God, and in his image are we designed as relational people. God said “It is not good for man to be alone,” but often our instincts are to withdraw from relationships when we’re in trouble, just when we most need other people.

Relationships are a gift from God to be nurtured, protected, developed, and enjoyed. They are part of the plan to help us achieve our potential and become more like our Lord. What about the quality of your relationships? Would you reply “Staff meetings have gone real smoothly this quarter” or “Well, we have a terrific Bible study group on Thursdays” or “I have a great time with the ladies in the Seeker group”?

The question was about relationships, and your answers are about ministries. They’re not the same thing. Without these “ministry relationships” some people would have nothing. If all our “relationships” are tied to our ministry, we are ripe for burnout. Those of us who think we can make a go of our ministry “on our own” are suffering from the

“angel syndrome,” behaving as if we don’t have the same needs as ordinary mortals just because we are serving the Lord.

We all need more than God and a best friend. We need a group of supportive relationships. The reason is simple: having more than one person in our lives allows our friends to be human. To be busy. To be unavailable at times. To hurt and have problems of their own. To have time alone. When that happens, there are others available to step in, if we have cultivated good relationships within our network of friends and acquaintances. This supportive group may consist of any combination of family, friends, and coworkers, but we should be aware of the potential pitfalls of concentrating our relationship web in any one of these categories. One who says “All my friends are my family” has perhaps never ventured out of the safety of his childhood to risk a mature relationship with others. Another whose circle of friends is limited to her coworkers may face great difficulty should she have to make a career change. Staff at an MK school are particularly susceptible to this risk because coworkers become almost like family, and they make up almost the entirety of the cultural grouping from which we draw our close relationships.

### ***Strengthening Relationships Among Staff***

The Bible clearly mandates that Christians are to develop intimate friendships with one another (Rom 12:15; Gal 6:2). But fellowship and community are more than potlucks and volleyball, coffee and coffeecake. Community is the weaving of lives into the Body of Christ—building each other up, sharing joys and sorrows, caring about each other’s needs and holding one another accountable. We know that, but how do we help individuals become a community in which vulnerable members feel free to share and bear one another’s burdens?

Denny Rydberg, in his book *Building Community in Youth Groups* (Thom Schultz Publications, 1985), gives a model for preparing individuals to move progressively along the steps from bond-building to opening up, affirming one another, stretching one another, and ultimately going together into the “real world” to make an impact together for the Lord. He suggests a wide range of activities that will develop skills and deepen the sense of community at each level of experience. You have

probably used a number of these or similar activities with the students at your school.

Surprisingly enough, many of them can be very effective in helping staff open up to one another and build stronger relationships, particularly at the beginning of a school year with new and returning staff just beginning to find out about each other. Even when working with adults it is good to remember the principles we use in teaching kids: people learn best when they are part of an active learning environment—the experience forces them to be involved. We remember longest the things we learn by discovery, when the learning takes place from within.

Bond-building activities are problem-solving tasks that force individuals to work together. They are non-threatening, fun, short, shared experiences where everyone struggles together to solve a problem and overcome physical or psychological barriers. Getting everyone in a group over a barrier, or setting up the familiar “trust fall,” where an individual stands on a raised platform and falls backward into the waiting arms of his teammates. This can be done in an outdoor setting, at a staff picnic or outing. For a quick opener at a staff meeting have groups of ten get in a circle, extending their right hands inward to take another’s hand. Then repeat the process with left hands, making sure that no one is holding both hands of the same individual. Once the group members are in this knot, tell them to untangle without letting go of hands. Have them try doing it without talking!

At a staff luncheon, have everyone stand in a circle as close together as they can. Stretch a rope around the outside of the circle, and have them sit down. Place the fixings for sandwiches or subs and sodas around the outside of the circle, and have them make lunch for one another. No person can prepare or ask for food for himself, and you may further stipulate that no one may feed himself. These activities need to be followed with a debriefing where individuals express their feelings of fear, frustration, gratitude, or triumph in conquering the problem as a group.

### ***Opening Up***

When a group cares enough to listen intently to what every individual has to say, the group comes alive. A sense of unity surfaces, friendships develop, and barriers break down. Opening up involves risk on the part of the individual and response on the part of the group. We usually tend to be “on guard,” and to protect ourselves, so we often need specific help to open up. The leader needs to set the example by listening carefully, using encouraging, warm body language and asking clarifying questions. This is not designed as an occasion to deal with issues or begin resolving conflicts, rather one to encourage mutual confidence so that we hear and value another’s thoughts.

You can begin with a series of “forced choices,” such as “Which of these two words best describes you?” and have individuals move to opposite sides of the room to indicate their choice of, for example, lion or lamb; pillow or rock; day or night; daisy or rose; steak or hamburger, occasionally asking one or two to volunteer the reasons for their choices. In a more formal setting, you might ask everyone to bring an object to the meeting that represents some aspect of their current relationship to God, and tell the group what it means to them. We had a lot of fun at a staff retreat when everyone wrote down something about themselves that they thought no one else knew. These were then listed on a handout sheet and staff were given five minutes to find out who matched up with which item. Then as a group we got to hear the details about which one had piloted a cruise ship, or who had brought another person back to life, and so on.

### ***Affirming***

Mark Twain once said “I can live for two months on one good compliment,” yet many of us can go for weeks on end without handing one out. It probably is not that no one deserves to be complimented, but we are not in the habit, and need some practice. In order to affirm one another, we can’t be afraid to say “I love you” or “I appreciate you because . . .” in front of a group. It is important speak directly to the person, use their first name, and be specific. Encourage one another to give examples, but beware of “back-handed” compliments. We may also

need practice in accepting compliments, without denying or minimizing, simply saying “thank you.”

Perhaps my most enjoyable exercise came at a recent staff meeting. We dividend into groups of about ten, and read I Cor. 12:12–27 together. Then each one in the group made a list of the group members, and nominated each one as a specific “body part.” The nominations were then shared around the circle, giving examples to back up the perceptions. One staff member commented later, “I don’t normally like warm, fuzzy type activities, but that was very profitable.” How long has it been since you gave a compliment good enough to live on?

### ***The Role of Administrator***

As administrators, we can set the stage for vibrant, growing relationships among our staff. Planned activities such as staff retreats, frequent get-togethers for subgroups among the staff, prayer breakfasts for the men, tea-time for the ladies, volleyball games or an afternoon excursion to a shopping mall, or gathering to watch the World Cup Final or the World Series in someone’s home, will enhance the possibilities for good staff relationships. An open door policy in the administrator’s office will allow questions to be resolved before they become issues. Staff meetings need to allow plenty of time for open interaction, not just rushing through the agenda in order to get on to “more important” things, like the maintenance projects in the afternoon. Frequent, positive communication is vital to “oiling the works” and reducing frictions. A weekly staff announcement sheet can help keep everyone informed.

We need to be on the lookout for signs of over-commitment that may lead to stress-induced relationship problems. Folks who are on the edge of burnout often respond in ways that damage relationships. Administrators need to be on the lookout for those whose stress level is rising to the point where they are candidates for burnout. We need to work with our mission boards and school board to provide adequate staff for the program that we are trying to run for our students. Short staffing will produce short tempers very quickly. Job descriptions of staff positions should have built in safeguards against over-commitment, and administrators should frequently remind staff to examine their level of activity and commitments. Often new staff arrive with lots of enthusiasm

and idealism, wanting to “dig in and get involved.” They get involved in too many things, and as the school year progresses find themselves getting more and more stressed with class preps, correcting papers, class activities, coaching, discipling, outreach, and “just helping out this one time” in another special program or activity.

If we are closely in tune with our staff, we can pick up on potentially dangerous precursors to burnout. Other staff may be struggling with the loss or illness of loved ones in the homeland, the wayward behavior of their kids, or their own loneliness or culture stress. Empathic counseling and more important, sympathetic listening can avert or minimize the effects of relentless stress. Communication is the key, both on the group level and the individual level.

Obviously no one administrator, not even an administrative team, can have this kind of close communication with all of the staff. In order to help, we have set up a “mentor-protégé” system that comes into play before the staff member arrives on the field. The mentor ideally writes to the prospective staff member to give details of housing arrangements, what things to bring, and begins the process of getting acquainted. (We often match up families with kids of similar ages.) They set up the house and furnishings, fill the fridge with breakfast foods for several days, meet the family at the airport, and help them settle in. The new family has meals provided in various staff homes for the first week or so, which gives them more opportunities to get acquainted and begin friendships. The mentor introduces them to the town, culture, how to pay bills, what to expect at holidays, and tries to give them advance warning of the details around school that everyone else takes for granted. This is in addition to the field orientation and the administrative introduction to their job responsibilities. The mentor relationship often continues as a “best friendship” as time goes on, and a web of interrelationships builds.

### ***What Do You Do with Diversity?***

Any group of individuals working together in the close proximity that we experience on the campus of an MK school is made up of diverse personalities, diverse philosophies, and diverse ways to implement philosophies. It is important to take advantage of diversity and enjoy it rather than wish for everyone to take the same approach to a problem.

We need to listen to a variety of viewpoints and encourage teamwork by giving everybody the opportunity to get involved.

Choose committees for diversity in order to benefit from a spectrum of opinion, to get input, to resolve issues, and to make recommendations. We need to establish an atmosphere that encourages expression and makes individuals feel that they have been heard, not just listened to. We can emphasize our common goals, and seek common ground. Our attitudes should reflect enjoyment of the diversity that God has brought together.

It is important, however, that we communicate with prospective staff before they commit to come, regarding what they can expect when they arrive on campus in terms of the overall philosophy of the school, vision, goals, approach, and expectations. The ethos of the school should be clearly conveyed during the application process. Is the school typically conservative? Broad-minded? Eager for new ways to do things? Strongly traditional? Is the structure flexible? What do you expect the school to be like ten years from now? It is not fair to recruit strongly independent, creative thinkers, or “idea people” to become a part of an institution that is highly resistant to change and then resent or resist their penchant for innovation. Nor will a successful working relationship be easily established and maintained if a conservative traditionalist joins a community of “free spirits” and is disregarded or ignored as just a “wet blanket.” Once again, the problem is not with the diversity of approach. Diversity is healthy. The problem comes in how we deal with the diversity.

### ***Survival When Relationships Don't Work***

When I was asked to discuss this material at the MKOA conference in Guatemala, we were going through a period of great difficulty in relationships among staff at our school. It seemed ludicrous to present a workshop on “Staff Relationships That Work” when it didn’t seem they *were* working. But as we struggled through the year and sought to resolve the difficulties, some principles became more and more real because we had to put them to the test. This article is not written because we have all the answers, but because we have had to ask all the questions and the Lord is still teaching us where to find the answers. It is necessary to ask

the question, “What happens when relationships aren’t working?” How does an administrator deal with that kind of situation?

**Do:**

The first, most important (and most easily forgotten) principle is to pray. Pray together as an administrative team and pray with those who are directly involved in the strained relationships, but do not “pray about it” with any others. It is not fair to those who are struggling with a difficult circumstance to bear the additional burden of having it spread around among their coworkers.

Pursue the relationship and concentrate on finding more and better ways to communicate. Seek out times to be together on the other person’s “turf,” where they will feel more comfortable and confident.

Persevere, since strained or fractured relationships do not appear in an instant, nor do they disappear quickly. Make it one of your priorities in time and energy to promote healing among injured brothers and sisters.

Give others the benefit of the doubt. “There is at least one thing that I don’t know about this situation” (Don Boesel).

Look for outside help. An independent assessor, counselor, or perhaps someone from mission headquarters could be invited to come alongside and provide counsel and encouragement, not only in the midst of the stress, but also in its aftermath.

**Don’t:**

Don’t just ignore the situation. It won’t go away. Don’t delay or put it off. Time will only make it worse.

Don’t withdraw. You need the support of your spouse and friends now more than ever.

Don’t gossip or seek to gain a following for your point of view. Relationship issues must remain only with those directly involved.

Don’t posture or make strong, categorical statements. Make sure your words are sweet and tender, in case you have to eat them later.

Don’t set policy based on an isolated incident. Now is not a good time to rewrite the staff manual. However, if the issue deals with

something that had not been clearly set out in previously published policy, make a note to have the school board look at how a similar situation could be prevented at a later date.

There may come a point in working through a staff relationship problem that you realize that the individual philosophies are too divergent, or the parties remain unwilling to work together in order to achieve a harmonious working relationship. At that point, the decision has to be made that will allow for a separation or dismissal of those who cannot happily work together on the team. Be willing to stand firm for the good of the ministry.

It is especially important to follow established procedures for separation, and fully document the steps that were taken in the process. A frequently updated notebook detailing the issues and the attempts at resolution (including dates) should be kept in the administrator’s private files. It may even be worthwhile to get legal advice when you first take an issue of this sort to the board, to insure that there will not be legal repercussions later.

***A Relationship Covenant***

Several years ago, a group of staff joined together to put in writing an approach to relationships that would be biblically based and specifically appropriate to the circumstances of the community in an MK school. They presented the results of their study at one of our all-staff meetings, and then summarized them in a “Relationship Covenant.” Their insights were so valuable that we had them printed up as a bookmark and gave them to everyone on staff. Perhaps they will be helpful for your situation as well.

***Conclusion***

The ministry of MK education affects the work of missionaries in all the countries that your school serves. When we are effective in our work, others are encouraged and enabled to concentrate on their work. Conversely, when there is an unsettled atmosphere at the MK school, many other ministries can be adversely affected. It is a favorite strategy of the enemy to attack where he can do the most widespread damage, and

the MK school is a favorite target. We need to have our defenses strong and our personnel prepared for battle. As we strengthen our own relationships and provide an example for the students to build their relationships on a firm foundation, we prepare a new generation to establish their own lifestyle of growth in Christlikeness. In the high intensity stress of ministry overseas, interpersonal relationships can be the key to maintaining equilibrium for a frazzled faculty. Those who take the time to build rich friendships, encourage one another in ministry, support one another in adversity, and edify one another in love have invested in an antidote to burnout and can effectively model Christlikeness to students and the national community.

### **Relationship Covenant**

In dependence on God, I covenant to:

Honor other people's boundaries as well as my own.

Exemplify respect when giving or receiving criticism.

Pray daily for those with whom I have conflict.

Forgive others even if they don't ask for forgiveness.

Resolve conflicts with the party directly involved as soon as is appropriate, using Biblical principles.

Be a peacemaker, speaking so as to edify others.

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## **46.**

### **Promoting Staff Continuance**

**David K. Wilcox**

This discussion does not include all the important variables regarding staff continuance. Individual human motivations and the working of the Spirit of God are simply beyond statistical analysis. But through research, trends have been identified which help us understand the issues.

#### **Factors We Can Influence**

**Commitment.** Besides being committed to God, an MK caregiver has made a commitment to an organization, i.e.: the mission and/or the school. That commitment can be nurtured and strengthened, or it can be undermined and broken. Organizational commitment, as defined by sociologists, is "the relative strength of a staff member's willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organization." (Mueller, C.W and J. L. Price, Economic, psychological, and sociological determinants of voluntary turnover. *Journal of Behavioral Economics* 9 (1990), pp. 321–335) MK caregivers who see the mission and school as making their personal desire to serve possible are most likely to renew.

Nurturing commitment begins with a clearly articulated mission statement for the school and sending mission. With that mission statement clearly understood, the staff member must feel an invitation to be a partner, not a hired hand. Overseas educators stay longer as they sense that the organization is moving along with them, facilitating their ministry, and valuing their contributions. Schools must regularly articulate their vision and encourage staff to remain focused on the goals they share in common. This person–organization linkage was the most significant of all variables examined in distinguishing who remains overseas.

**Job Satisfaction.** MK educators don't go overseas in order to look for personal satisfaction; they go in response to a call from God. But once on the field, a missionary teacher's intention to extend service is associated with the degree to which that person senses "a good fit" with

the ministry assignment. Job satisfaction means comfort with role clarity, role significance, autonomy, authority relationships, sense of competence, work load, and peer relationships.

Administrators can shorten a teacher's length of service overseas by inattention to the fundamental issue of job satisfaction. Is the position reasonable? Is it a good match with the educator's areas of competence? Are accountability procedures clearly established and is each position given significance?

**Spouse's Job/Role Satisfaction.** For married staff, the issue of a spouse's job and role satisfaction is even more important than personal job satisfaction in influencing length of service. If a mission teacher feels his or her spouse is happy about work or role, then the couple is likely to remain. The converse is true as well. What is the implication? When considering a couple for an overseas ministry, the fit must be a good one for both, or they probably won't stay more than one term.

**Cultural Adjustment** is another variable significantly affecting the length of service decision. The school can have a great influence on the staff members' cultural adjustment, beginning before the new staff member arrives overseas. MK school directors and home office mission personnel have issued consensus statements at the MKEA and MKOA regional conferences which assert the importance of pre-field and on-site orientation. Choosing a big brother or big sister for newly appointed staff, sending school policy manuals and handbooks, updating outfit lists, and double-checking travel plans are all ways overseas schools can send the message that the new staff member is valued and eagerly anticipated.

Once on the field, the adjustment process is long and sometimes difficult. Planning several days of meetings before school begins is important for orientation, but there is too much to learn in too short a time. Orientation must be ongoing, and must be deliberately monitored.

**Constructing a Plan.** The good news is that MK and international Christian schools can make a difference by influencing some of the variables associated with the continuance decision. The research indicates that to promote lengthened service, school leaders must:

- Strengthen the linkages between individual school personnel and the school and/or mission.

- Analyze the positions assigned to school personnel to determine if the positions are reasonable. Administrators must seek ways to improve actual work experiences and pay careful attention to the match between person and position.

- Develop long term plans for the ongoing cultural adjustment of new staff. This should include both pre-field orientation and on-field induction programs.

- For married personnel, school and mission leaders must determine whether clearly defined positions or roles exist for both individuals. Both must be qualified, needed, and desirous of filling the openings. Alternatively, some schools may need to increase their flexibility in determining what constitutes an acceptable ministry assignment for the spouse. Whatever the expectations for spouses, they must be clearly explained and accepted.

Sponsoring missions expend great effort in identifying and processing new school personnel. Likewise, overseas Christian schools must do their part to retain their staff. During eleven years of MK school administration, I was amazed at the way the Lord provided for our schools' needs. I saw the sovereignty of God in the coming and the going of staff. While we may understand the factors better through research, we should never forget that God will build his church, will provide for our needs, and will equip us for the tasks he has set before us.

Ed. note: David K. Wilcox wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on "Overseas Educators' Intention to Extend Service: A Discriminant Analysis." (University of Illinois, 1994) This chapter is excerpted, with minor editing, by permission from *World Report*, November/December 1995.

47.

## *Effective Parent-Teacher Partnerships*

**David C. Pollock**

“If you’re in trouble in school you’re in trouble at home.” This parent-to-child statement reflects one type of parent-teacher partnership which was common in the not-so-distant past. It indicates a relationship between the parent and teacher that is considerably different from what is commonly observed in many educational situations today. Too often parents and teachers may see themselves, or place themselves, in adversarial roles. This posture undermines our ability to provide an optimum educational experience for the student. Teachers and parents working together is a concept that needs to be reemphasized in Christian education, both in the home country and mission school settings.

### *Motivation for Partnership*

What attitudes and perspectives motivate the building of an effective parent-teacher team relationship? First, teaching must be done with the whole person in mind. In the educational process, teachers are not simply pouring data into the minds of students. They are making disciples.

Second, teachers must remember that parents are the primary educators who started the educational process before the teacher, and will have continued input throughout the school years and beyond. In society at large, many parents are failing by abdication or inability in this task. As a result, the teacher today assumes a larger role in the life of the student. However, this ought not to be the case with parents who are committed to obey Christ, the Master Teacher.

Third, while the teacher’s role is complementary and supplementary in the developmental process, his or her responsibility and influence remain profound. The fact is, the teacher may be the primary actor in many areas of learning. It is critical that teachers recognize the tremendous power of their position and that they, like parents, have the ability to build up or tear down, to undermine or support their students.

### *Teacher Initiative Essential in Reaching Parents*

In building an effective partnership, the teacher must usually initiate the relationship. There are often factors which may stand in the way of parents fulfilling their responsibility and pursuing this partnership. Parents may wrestle with a sense of inadequacy or guilt from past failures, or they may be uncertain about the teacher’s willingness or desire to establish this partnership. Teachers cannot wait for parents to act, but must take the initiative and reach out to the parents of their students. However, having the motivation and a willingness is not enough. Teachers need the understanding and skills with which to build a successful partnership.

### *Family Dynamics Impact Partnership*

In order to build this team in Christian international education and enhance a teacher’s ability to contribute to the partnership, several things are essential. The teacher must pursue an understanding of the unique dynamics of the family in the transcultural community. Dr. Kelly O’Donnell published a study in *The Journal of Psychology and Theology* (Vol. 15, No. 4, 1987) which should be required reading for all mission teachers. This article describes the stages of development in the parents (individually and as a married couple), the stages of development of each child, and the stages of development in the area of service and ministry. These stages intersect to produce behaviors and responses at one point in time that may be very different from actions at another point. Transitions and cross-cultural adjustments are overlays in the family dynamics that greatly influence interpersonal relationships, both in and out of the family unit. Teachers must also realize that their own responses are affected by these same influences.

When a family moves transculturally and internationally, parents develop a new list of conscious or unconscious concerns which must be addressed. Concerns about their children’s education, cultural influences and identity, the future of both parents and children, maintaining healthy family relationships, and health issues as well as spiritual needs head the list. This cornucopia of concerns, coupled with a sense of powerlessness which often characterizes people in transition, causes great conflict and concern for one’s own life as well as one’s dependents.

As a result of these pressures, parents may lash out at the teacher or school administrator. Parents may blame educators for failing to do what they consider to be necessary things for a good education or to properly care for their children. This criticism may come, although their children are actually receiving fine education and care. If this behavior occurs early in the parent-teacher relationship, it may create attitudes and postures that prevent the development of a healthy team relationship. Mature educators must carefully evaluate the nature of the complaint. Is it legitimate? Is it realistic? Is it appropriate?

For example, students may tell their parents about a teacher who really cares. This teacher spends long hours after school in his or her office just to be available to listen, advise, or be a friend. The students appreciate the sacrifices this teacher makes to spend time with them, knowing that his or her spouse and children are spending many evenings at home alone. Parents may express gratitude to the school's administrator because they appreciate what this teacher provides for their children. What happens, however, to the teacher who comes next? How do new teachers respond when the complaints come, either to them or the administrator? How do they answer the criticism that they are not as accessible as the previous teacher was? They may need to ask themselves, "Is it legitimate for parents to expect a teacher to always be accessible to students? Is it legitimate for students to expect teachers to be available when they have a problem?" The answer is Yes. "Is it realistic to expect a teacher to be available if it means consistently leaving the family alone? The answer is No.

Missionary parents often struggle with a sense of guilt. They fear their decision to move overseas will have a negative or even destructive impact on the lives of their children. Once again this guilt may become "educator directed." Parents may make high, perhaps even unreasonable, demands for special, individual attention to their children. Occasionally anger accompanies these demands. Teachers must not allow this anger to prevent the building of the team relationship which will, in fact, help restore to parents a sense of power and reduce the causes of their guilt. It is critical that mature educators develop a sense of resilience as well as responsiveness to parental needs. Educators must be nonjudgmental and non-condemning in facing pressure from a family.

The school administrator or mission agency can assist teachers in building this partnership and contribute to a positive outcome for families. Teachers need the training provided at pre-field seminars as well as on-field. They need resources to help them understand and deal with the transcultural adjustment, stress management, and parenting in a cross-cultural setting.

### ***The Importance of Good Communication***

Good communication is another key in building the team relationship. Once again, the professional educator must take the initiative. Parents need general information about school programs and the calendar of events. Information about school rules and policies as well as the consequences for breaking the rules needs to be communicated to parents clearly and early. Unwritten rules and policies that catch people by surprise evoke a sense of conflict which leads to criticism and undermines cooperative relationships. There needs to be personal communication with parents about the good as well as the bad. The teacher who has been in regular contact with parents on a personal basis, reporting on the progress of the student, is on a much better footing to deal with problems than the one who has been silent and makes contact only when problems arise. It is always a good rule of thumb to include a positive comment about the child even when a problem or conflict is being reported to the parents.

An issue in parental communication concerning a child in the Christian education setting is a matter of our own effective response to Scripture. Matthew 18:15 ff. gives clear direction in terms of dealing with issues. The child needs to be confronted with the issue on a one-to-one basis, prior to the involvement of anyone else. If the child responds appropriately, then Jesus indicated we have "won a brother [or sister]." It is a good idea that when "bad news" is sent to the parents, the student is given a copy so that he understands the nature of his offense and its seriousness, and can thus be encouraged to change that behavior.

### Coaching Parents

Another key in building this team relationship is the ability of the teacher to function as a coach. This is an important, although not always popular, role. The teacher who sees the student daily in the classroom is often able to view issues from a very different perspective than the parent. Because of his or her position and perspective, the teacher who has developed a good interpersonal relationship with the parents may be able to coach them in their responses, decision making and parent-child communication. This role of coach can work to the advantage of everyone. Although it is important that teachers recognize this opportunity and responsibility, they must at the same time tread lightly. The teacher must never confuse his role as a coach with that of the parent and risk becoming an invader of other people's families. That works to no one's benefit and everyone's detriment. Tact is critical. The teacher, exercising wisdom, discernment and sensitivity, must know when to stand *for* parents or *with* parents and know when to intervene.

When a child is functioning poorly in the classroom and showing evidence of not adjusting well, there are several areas that may be examined. There are contributing factors which must be taken into consideration by the teacher. First, the child is profoundly affected by the parent-to-parent relationship. Conflict within the home will often cause unacceptable behavior patterns outside the home. One needs to be very aware, however, that not all behavior struggles are due to conflict in the parents' relationship. Teachers need to be very careful in this particular area. They must guard against making assumptions or invading inappropriately. Teachers must be aware and sensitive.

A second area where children's adjustment may be affected is whether or not they perceive they are valued. The attitude displayed by the parent toward the child, in terms of the amount and quality of time spent with the child, are key issues in the child's perception of being valued. Teachers and caregivers at boarding schools need to be sensitive to many issues which may reflect the parents' attitudes. Does the child regularly receive mail from home? Are the parents willing to attend events that are important to the child? Do they pick children up on time at the end of semesters or for breaks? These factors along with many others, may indicate the parents' valuing of the child. When a teacher or boarding home parent has reason to believe that a child is not getting

sufficient input at this point, it is not improper for them to gently and lovingly make the parents aware of the child's need.

The third area for sensitivity is evaluating how the child perceives the value of the work that the parent is doing. Children respond to the attitudes of their parents. If parents are dissatisfied and reflect that dissatisfaction (whether with nationals, co-workers, or the agency under which they serve) the children will raise questions. They will question the value of their parents' ministry or the worth of being where they are. Many children are able to pay whatever price is necessary, along with their parents, as long as they know that it is worth the effort and sacrifice. Parental expressions of discouragement often are taken very seriously and internalized by children. The school plays an important role in affirming and reinforcing the children's sense that their parents' work is valuable. If teachers talk positively about what parents are doing and if, as part of the school program, the faculty, staff, and students are involved in ministry, then the child will develop a keener sense of what Mom and Dad are doing in some other part of the country or continent.

A fourth area to which teachers must be very sensitive is the issue of the confidence in God. In the missions community we are not only dealing with the normal challenges of overseas living and adjustment, but there is the spiritual overlay as well. We are engaged in this particular ministry because of what God has said or the way he has led in our lives. When the Great Commission was given, it was also with the promise "And surely, I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." Teachers and parents must recognize not only the imperative nature of the command, but also the faithfulness of the Commander to live out His promises. Joseph endured the ups and downs, pressures, and difficulties, in light of the reality that although others meant it for evil, God superintended his life and turned what might have been destructive into that which was directive. Children are watching to see whether or not we have this same confidence.

It is important to be aware that parents are at risk, either by living in communities where there is danger, or by having ministries and responsibilities that are themselves dangerous, such as flying airplanes. This imposes a particular stress on their children. Often an underlying sense of dread may impact the child's behavior and attitudes. This sense of threat

needs to be reckoned with, and both parents and teachers need to seek ways to give comfort and confidence to the child in turmoil.

I hope that as we develop our philosophy of Christian education, the opening comment in this article would be altered to something like, “If you are in school you are in the care of a team of parents and teachers who are lovingly discipling you.” Parents and teachers must work together in this process of making disciples. It is time for teachers and parents to be proactive in developing this team relationship to accomplish this goal.

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## 48. *Relations Between Teachers and Dorm Parents*

### **Evan and Jewel Evans**

Teachers and dorm parents must see each other as members of the same team. This teamwork is essential in achieving the common goal of providing the best possible care and education for MKs. Failing to regard one another as equals, comparisons, and a lack of communication all promote an us–them mentality. It is essential that teachers and dorm parents realize they are allies. They need each other’s support and encouragement. They also need the unique perspectives each has from contacts with students in the dorm or classroom respectively.

### *How Do We Build Partnership?*

First, schools can organize a *prayer partner system* that pairs teachers with dorm staff members. This helps each group to develop mutual respect and creates opportunity for them to share blessings and struggles with each other.

Second, schools should regularly hold *full staff meetings*, not only to discuss school issues, but also for fellowship and prayer together. On occasion, it is good to forget business and have a staff social.

Third, both teachers and dorm parents should look for ways to *involve each other in their ministry*. Teachers can invite dorm parents to give brief presentations in the classroom. Dorm parents can invite teachers to be part of dorm events such as devotional times, outings, or dinners.

Fourth, both teachers and dorm parents should practice the *art of giving secondhand compliments*. When a teacher hears a student say something positive about his dorm parents or about a dorm function, he can pass that compliment on to the dorm parents (and vice versa). This type of mutual encouragement helps to develop a deeper appreciation for each other and for their ministry.

Fifth, during vacations teachers and dorm parents can *work together on campus projects*. Teachers can help in painting, remodeling work, or other projects in the dorm. Dorm parents can help teachers in arranging bulletin boards, spring cleaning the classroom, or building projects.

The sixth way to promote partnership is to *focus on the spiritual development* of children. This requires creativity and coordination. For example, dorm parents can correlate and reinforce the classroom curriculum through their activities, especially in the area of Bible.

The seventh way to develop a team spirit is through *common activities*. Working on committees, singing in musical groups, playing in athletic events, serving on a task force, or attending a Bible study promotes unity and a sense of oneness. We get a deeper appreciation of each other's personalities, gifts and ministries when we work, play, and pray together.

Eighth, teachers need to be sensitive in giving *homework assignments* that involve help or supervision. Younger children often have assignments which require adult help or supervision, such as oral reading or Bible memory work. For a parent, such an assignment may take only half an hour to complete, but in a dorm with four first-graders, it would take the dorm parents two hours.

In assigning homework, teachers should carefully consider the ages of students, the number of boarding students in their classes, the nature of the assignments, and the amount of time it will require from dorm parents.

### ***The Importance of Proper Communication***

Sometimes the difficulty in relations between teachers and dorm parents lies in knowing exactly what information to share about a student and with whom to share it. Sometimes teachers pass on information that dorm parents would prefer not to hear. At other times, teachers do not pass on to dorm parents information that they would have told the parents.

On one occasion, a teacher failed to communicate to us that one of our dorm students was failing second grade. The situation did not come to light until mid-trimester when the teacher talked to the child's parents.

When the parents asked for our input concerning their daughter's academic problems, the request took us completely by surprise. Once communication was flowing between ourselves and the teacher, we could work together as a team to help the child, and she passed second grade. Teachers should also inform dorm parents about missing or late assignments. It is difficult to monitor the situation if they aren't aware of it.

Second, teachers should report new patterns or changes in behavior and academic performance. Dorm parents do not need to know about every problem that occurs in class, but they should know about developing patterns of behavior or sudden, significant, unexplained changes.

Third, dorm parents should be informed about disciplinary action taken at the school. It puts dorm parents in a difficult position if they learn about disciplinary action indirectly. Dorm parents need to know so they have a complete understanding of the students in their care.

Fourth, teachers should share information regarding health issues. If a student has difficulty paying attention or struggles to stay awake, it could be a sign of a lack of sleep or a more serious physical problem.

Fifth, teachers should tell dorm parents about students' positive actions, attitudes, or accomplishments. Dorm parents, like other parents, usually hear from teachers only if there is a problem. Dorm parents want to hear the good news so they can celebrate accomplishments and reinforce positive attitudes.

Sometimes dorm parents need to share information with teachers. Events such as the serious illness of a parent, the death of a family pet, the prospect of the family moving to another station, or redeployment to another country should be shared. These events may significantly affect the student's academic performance or progress. A dorm parent should share news about the student's home situations as any parent would.

### ***The Dangers of Inappropriate Communication***

In our efforts to work together as a team and share information about students, we must guard against sharing unneeded, negative information. Too much discussion about children with problems can lead to their being labeled as problem children or troublemakers. It can be difficult, if

not impossible, for a child to overcome a label, especially when it is passed around in the entire community.

Efforts to build a sense of teamwork among teachers and dorm parents may be undermined if other people are allowed to drive wedges between these two groups. Each group must respond cautiously to comments and criticism about the other. For example, sometimes a student approaches a teacher with complaints about his dorm parents (or vice versa). If this happens, the teacher should listen, but remember that every story has two sides and he is hearing only one side of it. Sometimes the teacher may feel it necessary to ask students about their own actions, attitudes, or role in the situation. At other times, the teacher may need to go to the dorm parent in question and have a discussion.

It is important that students have the assurance that adults will listen and that the lines of communication are open. This is especially true if a student mentions any type of sexual misconduct. Inquiries should be made immediately, but this matter needs to be handled very discreetly. Information should be shared only with those people who must know in order to investigate the claim.

Sometimes parents, fearing reprisal against their child, will share a complaint or concern about a teacher with a dorm parent (or vice versa). Parents, teachers, and dorm parents should not only support one another, but encourage each other to take concerns directly to the person involved, as outlined in Matthew 18.

### ***The Need for Separation***

Having emphasized the importance of nurturing a team spirit between teachers and dorm parents, we must also stress the importance of maintaining the separation and distinctiveness of these two groups. Separation between the academic world and the dorm is essential so the child can have a safe haven. Teachers need to establish their own discipline and authority in the classroom, so students can return to the dorm without fearing that they face “double jeopardy.”

If there is no separation of authority between the dorm and classroom, the child feels trapped with no place to go to as a haven. We have talked to MKs who did not feel close to their dorm parents. However,

often because of a caring teacher, they felt their growing-up experiences were positive ones.

As dorm parents and teachers, we must remain unified in our goal of providing the best care possible. However, we also must maintain our unique, separate roles that enable us to provide balanced care for MKs.

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## 49.

***You Are a Protector*****David C. Pollock**

The old TV program *Mission Impossible* introduced each episode with the phrase, “If you accept this assignment....” The missionary teacher or dorm parent begins “Mission Possible” with a similar, though unspoken, phrase. If you accept this assignment you are not simply teaching English or Math or History. If you are a boarding home parent, you are not simply checking dirt under finger-nails, keeping order in a dorm, or enforcing lights out. If you accept these tasks, you are accepting the role of an elder.

“To the elders among you ... Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” (I Peter 5:1–3).

As an elder, you are a shepherd with many roles, among them to be a protector of those in your care. Matthew 18:1–14 makes clear the important role that you as a teacher or boarding home parent have in any situation, but especially in those where parents are not immediately available to the child. In these verses, Christ warns about the seriousness of causing a child to stumble. Failing to protect vulnerable children may be a major factor that causes them to stumble.

***Dealing With the Past***

I have often commented that I feel like a “lightning rod” for horror stories of mistreatment of children, including missionary children. Conversations with teenagers and letters from fifty-year-old MKs reflect pain caused not only by the perpetrator of a wrong action, but by those who failed to protect the victim. (Even as I wrote this article, the phone rang and an MK college student called to ask for help related to an abuse situation from her childhood.)

We cannot undo the things that have happened to young people in the past. Wounds leave scars. However, we can help with their care and

provide comfort in the process of healing. We can and must take steps to ensure that there are fewer and fewer of these incidents in the future. Part of this process must include proper training for caregivers and raising the awareness of all those whose lives bear direct impact on missionary kids.

***Facets of Protection: Protection from Adults***

The task of protecting MKs is multifaceted. Some facets are obvious. The first facet of protection must be protection from abuse in any form. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, and aggravated psychological abuse must be addressed with vigor. Careful recruiting and selection, proper training, and active supervision of personnel must be developed in the MK care sector of every mission agency. Every staff and faculty member must understand that the responsibility to watch for abuse, and intervene.

When adult MKs report abuse taking place over a four-decade period in a school at the hand of the same individual, I am appalled that not one faculty member ever effectively raised a voice in protest and protection. When mission agency and school executives reject the pleas of adult MKs and deny the charges of groups of former students related to sexual abuse, it is an indication of a lack of spiritual maturity and commitment in leadership. New laws reaching across borders and extending statutes of limitations may accomplish what righteousness has not.

A forty-year-old MK working for a government agency in Asia told me that he had not been in a church since he was sixteen. His memories of being tied to a tree and left outside all night as a six-year-old child (along with a string of other horror stories from his experiences with a dorm father) had successfully driven a wedge of bitterness into his life. Through tears he asked, “Did God do that to me?” A sixty-five-year-old retired missionary reflected similar pain after having his daughters abused. “We trusted people we thought to be godly to care for our children, and look what they have done.”

A fifty-year-old abused MK, reflecting on his treatment at the hands of school personnel, commented that “individuals removed from their own cultural environment with its recognized constraints and restraints

may act in destructive ways considerably different from what their behavior would have been in their own culture.” If it is true that the danger of misconduct increases, then our vigilance and readiness to contain and protect must also increase.

### ***Protection from Other Children***

There are other areas of protection we must address in addition to safeguarding children from the misconduct of adults. A second facet of protection involves shielding children from the cruelty of other children. This is also a part of our trust. The bullying of smaller and younger children must not be regarded as a fact of life. It is behavior that is unacceptable. Sexual abuse does take place among kids, and adults need to be alert and open to the cries for help from victims.

Cruelty and injustice are not atypical behaviors of kids, and therefore adults must work at correcting and protecting. The bed-wetter should be protected and not shamed. The child who is slower to develop physically and sexually should be appropriately encouraged by adults who recognize that everyone has his or her own timetable for development. Adults need great awareness, discernment, and sensitivity in protecting children from mockery and other cruelties.

### ***Protection from Self***

Sometimes a child needs protection from himself or herself. Anna Mow, in the old volume, *Your Child*, tells the story of one young boy who was apparently out of control. In desperation, she wrapped her arms around his thrashing body until he finally relaxed. After a few minutes he turned to her and quietly said, “It’s OK. I can hold myself now.” A wise adult may need to intervene to save the child from self-destructive behaviors in a variety of areas. Seeing oneself as a protector instead of a prosecutor modifies one’s attitudes and actions toward the child.

For many years I have been impressed with the message of my friend Glen Taylor of Missionary Health Institute, who pleads for “invitations to live instead of invitations to die.” Abuse of another person sexually, psychologically, physically, or even spiritually invites that person to die, to lose important aspects of personhood. Misuse of humor,

breaches of trust, misuse of authority and power, injustice, and a failure to model mercy and grace are all invitations to die.

### ***Culture and Protection***

In an international MK school, cultural issues and differences which can be causes of pain and damage add complexity to the task of protecting children. Humor is also cultural. Jokes about a person or any perceived act of demeaning may be amplified by cultural differences. Failure to consider the implications of cultural differences in response to rules and expectations may cause damage. Even with lowly tasks such as toilet cleaning, sensitivity to the student’s cultural background is essential. Being the minority is always difficult, and being mocked as a minority, even good naturedly, may be cruelty.

### ***Comfort: A Primary MK Need***

Sharon Wilmer, a counselor of third-culture kids, wrote a letter several years ago in which she commented that one of the primary needs of MKs is for comfort. A multitude of MKs have responded dramatically to that letter. Good, casual, warm encouragement is often needed, but there are also times when the understanding which is communicated by comforting is crucial.

MKs often live with a constant sense of impending disaster if their parents are at risk in dangerous areas or are in high risk jobs. Children from these missionary families may respond by acting out in troublesome ways. We may mistakenly focus only on their actions and may miss the opportunity to address the needs and fears that caused their behavior. They desperately need adults who will respond with comfort and understanding rather than hostility and rebuke.

### ***Needed: A Child-Centered Approach***

Several years ago, I heard a colleague of Mr. Rogers, host of a children’s TV program, speak. He shared his insights regarding Rogers’ approach to children in his TV program. We would do well to consider and adopt these attitudes in our care and protection of MKs.

- Understand what the child brings to the situation.
- Act as an adult with child awareness.
- Acknowledge that humans make mistakes. Seek forgiveness for your own mistakes, and then be patient and willing to forgive theirs.
- Give children an invitation to safe relationships, recognizing that availability and receptivity are the keys.
- Affirm the child in ways that are both honest and obvious.
- Provide silence. Conversation isn't always essential. Be comfortable with time to process.
- Be gentle. Remember, gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit.

Protection of children requires defensive actions against the things that threaten their safety and well-being. It also requires a commitment to respond proactively and to do the right things as well as to guard against the wrong things. Perhaps if we truly act as protectors in the lives of children and young people, we will minimize the number of horror stories we hear from them ten or twenty years from now. If you accept this God-given assignment of caring for MKs, you are a protector.

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## 50. *Children with Special Needs*

**Wayne D. Lance**

### *Part I: Introduction*

As a child grows and develops, parents often wonder how he compares with what we have come to accept as “normal.” It is not unusual for a mother or dad to observe apparently unique characteristics in a son or daughter and to begin to suspect that the child is different from other children of the same age and sex. Questions might include:

Don't you think he looks a little heavy for his age? Should we put him on a diet?

She's so skinny. Do you think she's malnourished?

Our colleague's girl was reading by age five, but Jeffrey's not reading yet. I wonder if he has a learning disability. Could he be dyslexic?

She's only three and is already devouring books. Do you think we should try to get her in a program for gifted preschoolers?

She's so quiet. Will she be prone to depression?

My child never sits still. Could he have one of those attention deficit disorders we've been hearing so much about?

### *A Tendency to Compare*

Comparing our own children against some standard or other “norm” is hard to avoid. We may begin to view some characteristic, some attribute, as a bit extreme, perhaps even abnormal. And because we want to do what is best for our children, questions arising from our concern result in suspicion that something about our child's development is not quite right, or that we must be doing something wrong in our parenting or teaching. Even if we don't actively voice these questions, they are in the back of our minds.

When children enter school and begin to develop complex academic skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic, more opportunities arise to trouble Mom and Dad as they compare their children with classmates. These informal, yet insightful, forms of evaluation continue as children progress through junior high and high school.

Parents living overseas, and especially those teaching their children at home, follow a different scenario. They do not have a sampling of their children's peers to use as a yardstick, and they may find this lack of age-mates an obstacle to evaluating their children's progress. These parents may wonder how their children are measuring up in relationship to children in their home country. If for some reason parents suspect a child is not on track, various troubling explanations begin to loom in their minds.

As Christian parents, we believe that each boy or girl is unique, a special creation of God with his or her own learning style, personality traits, and intellectual potential. We value these individual differences—yet when the differences become extreme we are often troubled. And if these differences seem to interfere with learning, we begin to search for an explanation.

A significant number of children from all cultures, social classes, and ethnic backgrounds have what we refer to as “special needs.” It is not surprising, therefore, to find these special needs existing among our population of missionary children.

### ***MKs and Special Needs***

When CHED (Children's Education department of Wycliffe Bible Translators) receives letters asking for help in evaluating and teaching a particular child, that child is usually having difficulties in reading or writing, or perhaps in the development of speech and language. Often the letter suggests that some kind of learning disability or special need exists, but a comprehensive assessment and diagnosis usually has not been done.

While missionary children are often stereotyped as being above average in academic achievement, the fact is that a range of achievement does exist. Variation in behavior and susceptibility to physical, mental, and emotional handicaps are conditions from which MKs are not immune.

### ***How Many MKs Have Special Needs?***

We can find a clue to the number of special needs among MKs by looking at data from public schools. Approximately 10% of school-age children in the United States are receiving some type of special education services.

These children are not all in separate classes with a special education teacher. Most with special needs attend regular classes for most of the day and receive assistance from a speech and language or resource specialist for short periods during the week. Other teachers with special training provide instruction in such areas as adaptive physical education and hearing or vision impairments.

We should point out, however, that this 10% figure may not apply across the board to populations of MKs. MKs are not necessarily representative of the socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural populations in the U.S. MKs come from families with a typically lower incidence of handicapping conditions than found in the general population. In addition, many MKs come from countries other than the U.S., where a different set of criteria may be used to determine eligibility for special education.

Another factor to consider in trying to project the number of MKs with special needs is that in order to qualify for special education services in the public schools, children must be assessed and must meet certain criteria. Of necessity, a label must be applied to a child (mentally retarded, hearing impaired, visually impaired, orthopedically handicapped, learning disabled, and so on) before services are offered.

On the other hand, MKs living overseas, whether being taught at home or in a local or boarding school, do not have to pass through screening, assessment, and the subsequent receiving of a label in order to have their special needs met. A major advantage of small group and individual instruction such as received by most MKs is that, by virtue of this type of instruction, their unique needs are more easily met without being assessed and labeled as “special.” Thus they are never formally identified and counted as “exceptional children,” as they might be in a public school setting.

In spite of these differences between public schools and home teaching situations or small private schools, we may expect to find a small but significant number of children from missionary families manifesting difficulties in learning. Some may have hearing or vision impairments; others may be delayed in the development of speech and language. If the letters we receive are a reliable indicator, quite a number will have some characteristics common to the group of children we call “learning disabled.”

### ***Part II: Definition and Terminology***

What are the implications of describing a child as having “special needs”? Are children properly labeled “exceptional” or “learning disabled” when they are experiencing difficulties in learning to read and write? Is failure to master mathematics an indication of a learning impairment? What do educators mean when they use terms such as “handicapped,” “impaired,” or “disabled”?

The majority of parents teaching overseas will not come across the terms commonly used by special educators. A few, however, may encounter unfamiliar and confusing terminology when corresponding with public schools, talking with consultants, or reading curriculum materials. Parents who refer a child to an agency or specialist for assessment will be confronted with terms derived from medicine and the social sciences.

### ***A More Positive View of Exceptionality***

Every discipline has its own nomenclature, jargon, and the inevitable proliferation of acronyms. Special education is no exception. As programs for exceptional children have increased in number and complexity in recent decades, in both the United Kingdom and the United States, educators and psychologists have invented a whole new vocabulary for labeling children and specifying services.

In an attempt to move from the negative connotations surrounding certain designations to more socially and politically acceptable terms, terminology has changed over the years. The time has long passed when we would speak of individuals with limited cognitive ability as “morons,” “idiots,” “imbeciles,” or “mentally deficient.”

Now we are more apt to classify such persons as mildly, moderately, severely, or profoundly mentally “disabled.” Some educators even avoid the term “mentally retarded” altogether and describe a person as being “developmentally disabled” or “developmentally delayed.”

Individuals with physical or sensory impairments formerly labeled “handicapped” are now spoken of by those in the caring professions as “physically challenged.” The concept behind this change is the greater probability of assisting people in achieving their full potential if we focus on a positive view of what they can accomplish, rather than the negative consequences of their condition.

Some argue that members of the helping professions are merely coining euphemisms. While we do often change terms because we don’t like the meaning associated with the old ones, we also know that labels can result in self-fulfilling prophecy when used to describe a class of individuals.

Studies demonstrate that parents and teachers often set their expectations for a child’s performance based on limited information. When guided by a stereotypical, one- or two-word label which supposedly defines a child’s capabilities and potential, we respond accordingly. How we label or describe a child can make a decided difference in how we teach the child and how he or she will eventually achieve and compete.

### ***Technology and Special Needs***

Scientific, educational, and technological advances have altered our understanding of what certain persons can and cannot do, and this has had an impact on the terminology we use. Individuals who in the past would have spent a lifetime in a custodial institution are now living at home or in a foster home, attending public schools, and participating in varying levels of productive work. The terms “retarded” or “crippled” no longer aptly describe the potential and actual status of many who formerly received these designations and lived in large institutions.

Changes in vocabulary have also come about through a better understanding of the underlying condition responsible for the problems children experience in learning. For example, “minimal brain dysfunction” was a controversial term a few years ago.

Now we find a greater emphasis on the hyperactive or hyperkinetic aspect of this syndrome, along with the associated difficulties in attending to tasks. The terms now being used are “attention deficit disorder” (ADD) and “attention deficit hyperactivity disorder” (ADHD), which we will discuss later.

Recently, some children with autism are beginning to communicate through a new technique called “facilitated communication.” If this technique is as effective as some believe, the term “autism” will likely be replaced with a new designation reflecting a more positive outlook than the public associates with the current label.

Computer technology is opening new vistas of opportunity for study and work for persons with sensory and physical impairments. When measured by standards of productivity in the workplace, “handicapped” no longer seems an appropriate term for individuals who hold down jobs and function independently.

### ***Definition of “Special Needs”***

In this series, we have chosen to use “special needs” to refer to children experiencing more than the usual difficulties in learning common tasks and school-related material. Though most children at some point struggle with academics, the term “special needs” implies more than a variation in aptitude or a temporary difficulty in learning a given subject. We use it here to refer to a relatively small percentage who have been diagnosed as having an impairment serious enough to significantly interfere with learning.

Educators use the term “special needs” to describe a child who differs from the average in mental characteristics, sensory abilities, communication abilities, social behavior, or physical characteristics to such an extent as to require special services. The term “exceptional child” may be considered a synonym for “special needs.” (Sometimes the term “exceptional” is used as an all-inclusive term, not only of individuals with special needs but also of those who are gifted and talented.)

Federal and state laws specify criteria for determining how much a child must differ from the average in order to be classed as exceptional or

having special needs. Typically, precise guidelines for providing special services are written into laws and regulations by states, provinces, and federal governments. For example, regulations specify the degree of hearing loss necessary for the hearing impaired to receive services. For a child to be classified as learning disabled, there must be a significant discrepancy between his measured ability and his success in basic academic subjects.

### ***Normal Curves and Deviation***

School psychologists often describe a child’s measured performance on a given test as being within the normal range or as deviating from the norm to some degree. In determining if a child is exceptional and in need of special services, the question must be answered regarding what constitutes a significant difference from the norm.

Intelligence and other types of tests are normed and scores are plotted along the normal curve. Approximately 68% of any normally distributed population is expected to fall within one standard deviation of the midpoint of this curve. Some 95% of a normally distributed population falls within two standard deviations. Usually those who diverge more than two standard deviation marks are considered to constitute exceptionality.

We indicated that approximately 10% of the school-age population in the United States is receiving some type of special education service. Most of these children are in regular classes, receiving services from a specialist part-time. A much smaller proportion are actually in self-contained, special classes. The decision to label a child as “exceptional” or “special” is not taken lightly. In fact, there are now many safeguards in place to prevent this from happening unnecessarily.

By definition, a special needs child differs from the average in mental characteristics, sensory abilities, communication abilities, social behavior, or physical characteristics to such an extent as to require special services.

### ***A Matter of Style?***

The distinction between special needs and learning style is often blurred. Confusion exists over whether a child is an exceptional individual requiring specialized services, or merely one who prefers a learning style that requires some adaptation of the way material is presented or the way the learning environment is structured.

A boy who is a bodily/kinesthetic learner, a mover, may not do well in a program basically designed for a linguistic learner. He may even appear to be failing miserably in learning to read. Some teachers and parents may be inclined to label him as learning disabled—that is, requiring special education, when in reality what is needed is a modification of the way the reading curriculum is presented.

Learning style may be thought of in terms of preferences, attributes, or abilities which contribute to how quickly and easily an individual is able to learn. One person may be oriented toward the auditory channel, another prefers the visual mode, while yet another is more a kinesthetic learner. Other styles may be described by the approach being used, such as logical-mathematical, social-interpersonal, or global-analytic.

It is important to recognize the learning style preferred by each child, as well as to understand the teaching style which fits that child. For the purpose of our discussion here, the point being emphasized is that failure to do well in school because of a mismatch of learning style and teaching style is not evidence that a child is a candidate for special education.

### ***Being Objective***

It is nearly impossible to be objective about our own children. We parents have a built-in tendency to protect our offspring. Sometimes this subjective view causes us to overlook their faults and weaknesses. At other times, we become overly concerned, even unduly critical, with expectations unreasonably high. Parents teaching their own children have the added frustration imposed by being both parent and teacher. Somehow this tends to magnify aspects of behavior and performance.

For these reasons, it is not unusual for parents teaching their own child in an overseas situation to view their child as exceptional, when in

fact he or she is well within the range of normal behavior and performance, or merely has a different learning style than the parents are used to.

On the other hand, it is also possible to overlook a potentially serious special need and pass it off as a mere idiosyncrasy or personality trait. This occurs most often when the special need is not physically obvious or easily diagnosed by a physician or specialist. Advice from experienced teachers, other parents, and consultation from a specialist can help parents arrive at a more objective understanding of their child's adjustment and progress in learning school subjects.

Among the most common category of exceptionality is "learning disability," or "LD." Closely associated with that term is "dyslexia," and more recently "attention deficit disorder."

### ***Part III: Learning Disabilities***

The largest category of exceptional children being served in the public schools of the United States is termed "learning disabled." Slightly less than 5% of all school-age students are thus identified.

There has been a fairly steady increase in the number of youngsters being served under this category since about 1977, while during the same period the number of children served in most other categories has remained relatively constant, or in some instances even decreased.

With these statistics in mind, it is not surprising that many of the letters coming to the CHED office from parents and teachers include requests for information about learning disabilities. Some ask for general information, but most of the questions are specific to an individual child.

Following are examples of problems associated with learning disabilities. The quotations are taken from letters written by parents teaching overseas.

"He understands and recalls well what is read or said to him. He will consider something for a long time, then come back with excellent questions later. At the same time, he has a short attention span and consistently moves or fidgets when asked to concentrate on something. He is easily distracted. I often need to touch his hand or call his name to keep his attention."

“Reversal of letters, numbers, and words has continued beyond what we consider a natural developmental stage. He will frequently read words from right to left by reading the final letter and guessing the rest of the word based on context.”

“When reading, he will often lose track of which word or even which line he is on.”

“After three years of home teaching, he is just now beginning to read somewhat independently on a first-grade level.”

“His self-confidence is beginning to suffer.”

“He has a problem taking tests. We go over the material together and I know he knows it, but he may score very low on a written test. Then the next week he may get 100%.”

“While working on complex math problems (story problems), he seems to get lost in the information.”

“He often seems to be daydreaming.”

“His dad never did well in school either.”

“He has developed a habit of looking at others’ work to get cues rather than doing his own work.”

Though these comments reveal only part of the concerns and frustration experienced by parents, they are indicative of the most recognizable and typical characteristics of children with learning disabilities.

### ***Characteristics***

No matter how we describe it, the learning disabled category is not a homogeneous group. There are, however, a number of characteristics which set these children apart from their peers.

Not every child identified as learning disabled demonstrates all of these most common characteristics, but at least a few of these behaviors are usually present:

- hyperactivity
- poor motor coordination
- visual, auditory, or other perceptual impairment

- short attention span
- distractibility
- impulsiveness
- lower than expected levels of achievement in learning academic skills and performing other cognitive tasks.

Because of problems experienced in learning, loss of self-confidence is not unusual, as well as feelings of frustration and a sense of failure. Sometimes emotional and behavior problems develop. These manifestations can lead to frustration by parents and teachers and a vicious circle of failure, criticism by adults, self-criticism, and more failure.

All the characteristics typical of learning disabilities trouble parents (and children as well) to some degree, but the resultant academic underachievement usually causes the greatest concern. In many cases, it is not until the child begins to demonstrate difficulties in learning to read, spell, write, and so on, that parents really become aware that there may be a problem. The preschooler or kindergartner may have had problems in attending, or atypical perceptual or language disorders, but we often attribute them to immaturity and individual rates of development.

### ***Learning Disabilities Defined***

Definitions of a learning disability by experts in the field differ, but the following one proposed by the National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities in 1981 is generally accepted:

Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction,

psychogenic factors), it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

No doubt one of the reasons for the increase in the number of children served in this category over the past fifteen years is due to the inclusiveness of the definition. The use of the terms “intrinsic” and “presumed,” coupled with a broad area of possible difficulties in language and thinking skills, serve as an umbrella for special needs not otherwise accounted for.

While a vision or hearing impairment, or even mental retardation, may be quite obvious (or at least subject to accurate diagnosis and measurement), learning disability is much more difficult to “get a handle on.” As a result, it becomes a catch-all category when no other exceptionality can be identified. If the child is having difficulties in learning and there seems to be no verifiable sensory, mental, social, or emotional explanation, then it is presumed that there must be some neurological explanation.

It should also be mentioned that in earlier days of special education, many children were labeled mentally retarded who now are categorized as learning disabled. This trend has to do with a number of factors, including changes in definitions, the use of different measuring instruments, socio-political factors, and court rulings which have restricted which students may be labeled as mentally retarded.

It is appropriate at this point to mention something about dyslexia. The term refers to difficulties in the use of written words, including reading in the narrow sense of decoding words. It also includes the broader understanding of reading involving meaning, usage, pronunciation, spelling, and writing. Most educators subsume dyslexia under the umbrella of learning disabilities. Special programs in public schools are usually staffed by specialists who serve all children with learning disabilities, although there are reading specialists who concentrate on the teaching of remedial reading.

### ***Causes of Learning Disabilities***

Trying to determine the etiology, or cause, of a disability is what makes the category of learning disabilities so difficult to pin down. When

does a serious problem actually exist, and when is the child just slower than his peers in learning to process information? Or perhaps the child just has a unique means of perceiving the world. Does this necessarily mean he is disabled in some way?

The fact is, we can seldom determine the basic cause of the child’s problems in learning. Does the child have some type of brain injury, perhaps because of trauma at birth or during early childhood? Is there some structural difference in the child’s brain? Are hereditary factors involved? Or is the condition due to biochemical irregularities brought on by diet or other imbalances in the child’s system? It is rare that we can accurately determine and verify the cause. Much has to be inferred from the child’s behavior and from performance on various tests and instruments.

Schools are caught in a dilemma: they know the child is having serious learning problems, but they cannot legally identify and serve a child in special education without sufficient evidence that the child is exceptional. They must establish that there is some cause other than environmental or cultural factors, or lack of opportunity. How can this be established if there is no observable handicapping condition?

### ***Criteria for Identification***

The public schools try to respond to this dilemma by establishing criteria for identification as learning disabled and qualification for special education. In the category of learning disabilities, a severe discrepancy between a child’s measured ability and his success in basic academic subjects must be established in order to qualify. In other words, the pupil has to be markedly behind his peers on measures of achievement, as well as presenting evidence of some intrinsic condition.

Although the criteria for what constitutes a severe discrepancy varies among the states, a rough rule-of-thumb is that a child must be at least one year behind in the primary grades, and two years behind in grades four and up. Another way of looking at the discrepancy is at least one-half year delay for each year of expected achievement.

Space precludes a review of assessment instruments and practices in this brief discussion of learning disabilities. Suffice it to say, there are

many controversial approaches and numerous testing instruments available when it comes to finding and documenting evidence that a child has an intrinsic condition presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction.

Fortunately, parents teaching their children do not have to be concerned about qualifying a child for special education. They do not have to go through a comprehensive assessment process and pin a label on their child. While they may be spared these, they are faced with a search for answers and must make choices when their child begins to demonstrate difficulties in learning and they sense that all may not be as it should be.

These parents want to know, “Do I change my methods and materials to correct or remediate some basic underlying neurological process that is responsible for the difficulty, or do I ignore the ‘cause’ and focus on methods and materials to directly teach the skills the child is expected to learn?”

#### ***Part IV: Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Methodology***

Before addressing the topic of methodology, a few comments are in order regarding attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a condition with some of the same characteristics observed in children with learning disabilities. This condition has received considerable attention in recent years, and parents should be aware that such a special need exists, in case they encounter this term. The important point is not the category under which a child is labeled but whether his needs are being met in the educational setting.

#### ***Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder***

According to criteria published in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, a child classified as ADHD displays signs of developmentally inappropriate inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity inconsistent with his or her chronological and mental age. The symptoms are most obvious in situations that require

self-application, as in the classroom. The signs are less apparent when the child is in a new or a one-to-one situation.

Children with ADHD tend to:

- be very fidgety
- be easily distracted
- have difficulty following instructions and remaining seated
- talk excessively
- interrupt others
- lose things
- engage in physically dangerous activities without considering the consequences.

It should be noted that these symptoms are not a problem unless they are outside the range of normal behavior for a child’s mental and chronological age. Some of the above symptoms are typical of very young children and, in them, should not be viewed as abnormal.

Mary Cahill Fowler, the parent of a child with ADHD, begins her guide for other parents by writing, “Maybe you know my kid. He’s the one who acts before he thinks. It’s usually upon some rash impulse that scares the living daylights out of me, like seeing how fast he can ride a Big Wheel down a long, steep, curvy hill.”

From this vivid introduction, the author goes on to describe the characteristics of these children and to provide practical suggestions for coping with their educational and behavioral needs. This guide is recommended reading for parents who have a child with an attention deficit problem.

Most schools group attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder under the category “learning disabled,” although some educators and psychologists prefer to think of ADHD as a behavioral or emotional disorder. The important point is not so much the category under which the child is labeled as the fact that his or her special needs are being met in the home and/or school.

### ***Methods and Materials***

What really matters for a child who has difficulty learning is not the label that characterizes the condition, or even being able to determine the cause of the condition. More important, it is being able to decide what can be done to enhance opportunities for that child to learn the skills necessary for success in life.

The question which arises is often something like this: “Do I change my methods and materials to correct or remediate some basic underlying neurological process that is responsible for the difficulty, or do I ignore the “cause” and focus on methods and materials to directly teach the skills the child is expected to learn?”

Educators have argued this same question for years. Some have spent whole careers developing specialized methods and materials designed to “correct” visual or auditory perceptual problems. Others have come at it through the central processing stage: teaching strategies involving memory, classification, reasoning, and evaluation. Still other educators have taken the position that trying to eradicate some underlying cause is of little or no lasting value, and the way to really help children learn is to directly teach the skill you want them to learn.

This writer leans in the latter direction. In reviewing the research, I find that the use of activities and worksheets designed to correct some problem associated with visual or auditory perception, laterality, and other so-called prerequisite skills are of questionable value. By contrast, approaches and materials designed to directly teach skills are most apt to achieve the desired results.

It is not within the scope of this article to go into detail on methods and materials for teaching children with learning disabilities. There are many excellent books on this topic. The following general suggestions may be helpful to the parent with a child who demonstrates some of the characteristics of learning disabilities.

### ***The Teaching Style***

- Be flexible. What works successfully with other children may not work with a child who has a learning disability or other special need.

- Help your child know what to expect and when to expect it. Many children who have difficulties in coping with distractions and in making appropriate choices are more successful with structure and routine. (Structure and routine should not preclude flexibility to accommodate individual differences and use of teachable moments.)

- Be aware of frustration levels. Students with learning disabilities are easily discouraged. Once the level of frustration has been reached, withdrawal of privileges, punishment, or even rewards seldom motivate the child to succeed with the learning task. Make certain that the student’s academic tasks are on his ability level.

- Explain, demonstrate, and obtain feedback. Give directions in a variety of ways. These children often do not really understand typical instructions related to school subjects; even if they understand them, they may not know how to apply them.

- Help your child see the relevancy of what he is expected to learn. Don’t take it for granted that he will automatically make a connection between assignments and what goes on in the outside world.

- Use charts and other visual representations of work to be accomplished and completed. It helps students to have a tangible means of keeping track of their own progress.

### ***The Teaching Environment***

- Minimize distracting stimuli. This does not mean removing pictures and bulletin boards and having a sterile environment, but rather providing a work space for the student where he or she can get away from distractions when necessary.

- Increase opportunities to learn through the favored channel (or learning style). In some cases, the student may learn best through the very channel through which he is most distracted. Select the stimuli that come in through this channel.

- Shorten work periods when necessary, interspersing quiet seat work between periods of activity. Tasks which a student finds enjoyable should follow tasks he or she finds difficult. Short, successful work

periods are better than longer, less successful ones. As the child's ability to concentrate increases, gradually lengthen the work periods.

### ***Adapt Materials and Methods***

- Point out important information in textbooks. Help the student identify main ideas and sort out the important from the less important.
- Tape record textbooks and other reading materials. Sometimes this can be done by other children in the family.
- Use high-interest/low-vocabulary materials as alternative means for presenting similar information.
- Assign independent work in addition to teacher-directed work. Assignments students can do independently develop their feeling of competence and success.
- Teach specifically what many children generally learn incidentally. Do not assume that because of age and overall intellectual ability a student knows and understands what other children of that age have already learned.
- Use multisensory approaches to teaching difficult subjects. Don't rely only on the channel the student seems to prefer.
- Use tools to compensate for disabilities. Calculators, typewriters, and computers can often enable a student to succeed when otherwise he might fail.

### ***Teach Learning Strategies and Study Skills***

- Teach your child how to organize facts. This includes identifying and isolating facts, deciding which facts are important and of higher or lower order, and placing them within an organized framework.
- Help your student see how books are organized (e.g., table of contents, headings, subheads). Some students have no idea how a typical textbook should be read. Teach such aspects as previewing, using advance organizers, understanding critical vocabulary, and self-questioning.
- Teach outlining and note-taking. Use meaningful material, not just outlining and note-taking for the sake of the skills themselves.

### ***Behavior Management and Social Skills***

- Reinforce the student for demonstrating appropriate study skills and other behaviors. Use both tangible and intangible rewards appropriate to age and maturity of the student.
- Ensure that your child understands what behaviors are expected. Use written behavioral contracts to which you can refer. Help him to monitor his own behavior through charting.
- Allow natural consequences to occur as a result of the child's behaviors. Ensure that he or she knows beforehand what the natural consequences are apt to be.
- Involve students in establishing household rules and review them periodically.
- Require your child to make eye contact when you are giving information. Maintain close physical proximity when talking to him.
- Have the student read, or read to him or her, stories about other children with difficulties in learning. Talk about how the child feels when he cannot succeed.

### ***Language Arts***

- Provide alternate means for using language. Don't let the lack of ability in written expression hinder the development of expressive language. Allow the student to dictate stories rather than always writing them. If you have one, use a computer in place of paper and pencil. Use spelling checkers with computer word processing programs.
- Use freestyle writing to help students develop a sense of written expression. The goal is for students to get their thoughts and feelings on paper without concern for spelling, sentence structure, or syntax.
- Read good, age-appropriate literature aloud to your children. Immerse them in hearing the written word spoken.
- Teach spelling in meaningful contexts. Take words that the student misspells in his own writing. Make spelling tests in the form of short and complete sentences.
- Use a three-pass repeated reading method in reading books or stories that interest the student.

- First, read a short selection as a reading model. Have the student follow along.
- Second, have the student read the paragraph aloud with you. Pause slightly at the end of sentences, but read at a natural pace. Do not stop for words he does not know.
- Finally, have the student read the passage by himself.

If a marker is helpful to a student when reading, have him block out the text above the line he is reading. This does away with the text he no longer needs, but encourages him to keep tracking to the next line below.

### ***Part V: Sensory, Physical, and Behavioral Disorders***

Public Law 94-142, comprehensive federal legislation enacted by the U.S. Congress in the 1970s, identifies ten categories of exceptionalities as follows:

- learning disabled
- speech impaired
- mentally retarded
- emotionally disturbed
- other health impaired
- multihandicapped
- hard-of-hearing and deaf
- orthopedically impaired
- visually handicapped
- deaf-blind.

We have discussed children with learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, the latter usually considered a subcategory of the former. Here are some brief descriptions of other categories.

### ***Sensory Disorders***

Loss of sight or hearing, two of our primary channels of receiving sensory information, can be a serious handicap to learning unless adaptations are made in the methods and materials used for instruction. Many of us, especially as we grow older, experience some degree of visual and hearing impairment. But in most cases, corrective lenses or

hearing aids make these decreases in acuity a minor inconvenience rather than a major handicap. However, a child born with a vision or hearing impairment, or who suffers the loss of either of these channels at an early age, must receive both medical assistance and specialized training in order to develop language and acquire other skills in keeping with his full potential.

We will not attempt to specify the criteria used by schools for classifying children for the various categories of vision and hearing loss. Programs differ depending on whether a child has partial or low vision, is blind, or is hard-of-hearing or deaf.

The extent to which children with sensory losses are mainstreamed into regular classes often depends on the degree of vision or hearing loss and the child's ability to cope in a typical classroom environment.

Parents need to be aware of signs that a child is experiencing a loss of vision or hearing, conditions not always obvious in very young children. Children raised in environments where they are subject to infections and other increased risks for damage to the sensory mechanisms should receive screening and physical examination any time that parents or teachers have reason to suspect that vision or hearing may be impaired.

Can a child with significant impairment in vision or hearing be taught by parents in the home? Or must such a child receive instruction in a special education setting from a teacher trained to work with visual or hearing impairment? This question is not an easy one to answer—nor is the answer without controversy among professionals in the field of special education.

With recent innovations in technology such as special adaptations and assistive devices for computers, children can take advantage of powerful tools for learning within their homes if parents can obtain the training, hardware, and software necessary to use these programs and devices. However, as marvelous as the new technology is, the expense and problems associated with getting hardware and software through customs in some foreign countries, installing and maintaining them and using them under less than ideal environmental conditions may seem insurmountable obstacles for families living in isolated areas.

In addition to the difficulties inherent in taking advantage of adaptive technology, children with significant impairments in vision or hearing have needs beyond those that can be met by computers and specialized devices. A blind child who may need to learn Braille and receive mobility training, or the deaf child who may need to learn an alternative form of communication, are only two examples of needs that may not be adequately addressed by parents within the home, unless of course the parents have received the necessary specialized training.

Parents must also consider the amount of time they are willing and able to devote to the task of teaching a child with unique needs. All these factors should be considered prior to making a decision to home-teach a child with a significant loss of vision or hearing.

### ***Physical and Health Impairments***

Any number of conditions are responsible for children being classified as physically or health impaired. Orthopedic impairments, cerebral palsy, heart abnormalities, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, seizure disorders, and illnesses such as poliomyelitis are just a few of the conditions which may or may not directly affect the child's ability to learn using traditional methods and materials.

Sometimes these children can be instructed in basic skills with little or no adaptations needed in the curriculum, but due to their physical disability may have other needs which can be met only by physical or occupational therapists. In other cases, cognitive and/or physical functioning may be so impaired that the typical parent is unable to adequately teach these children at home.

### ***Behavior Disorders and Developmental Disabilities***

Emotional disturbance may be:

- the result of biogenic factors
- associated with social maladjustment
- manifested as anxiety-withdrawal or aggression-disruption, or in other atypical ways.

Whatever the etiology, or the manner in which the disturbance is acted out, the impact on the family can be so disruptive that outside assistance is necessary. When this occurs, parents and other family members may be able to learn how to provide the support system necessary to enable the child to function in a home-schooling situation. In other instances, both child and family may be better off if the child receives special education in a classroom setting staffed by specialized teachers and therapists.

Much the same can be said for children with restricted or limited intellectual ability. Many of them have been successfully educated within the home. Some families who were able to provide home teaching for nonexceptional children within the family found that the child with development disabilities functioned better when educated in a special class within the public or private schools.

### ***Part VI: Some Misconceptions about Special Needs***

Parents of a child with an exceptionality should be aware of some common misconceptions about educating such children.

· If we can just pin a label on the underlying condition, our problems will be solved. In medicine, physicians are often able to diagnose a condition and then prescribe treatment that alleviates the problem. Unfortunately, this is often not the case in special education. Merely giving a series of tests and labeling a child "learning disabled," "mentally retarded," or any other term does not lead to a tried and true prescription.

Educational diagnosis is not as precise as physical diagnosis. Remediation or training is much more an art than a science, and there are few areas in special education where research provides sufficient evidence to support one method or approach as being superior to all others. A label does not in itself automatically lead to the proper intervention. Too many parents have spent countless dollars and hours (not to mention the emotional cost on children and other family members) trying to obtain an informed and accurate diagnosis—and in some cases even a "cure." This is not to suggest that professional assessment is unnecessary, but rather to point out that parents need to be

prudent and wise with realistic expectations when obtaining diagnostic help.

· All we can do is to give up our overseas ministry and return to our home country. At times the problems associated with home-educating a child with an exceptionality do seem overwhelming. The only answer may seem to be to return home and enroll the child in special education. Yet many parents have successfully taught such a child at home, even in isolated settings. At times like this, they need the counsel of those who can help them assess their particular situation, including the demands of their ministry and the availability of support. Then they can formulate a plan that will best meet the needs of their particular family.

In making these kinds of decisions, it should be borne in mind that special education in a public or private school may not necessarily be in the best interest of the child. Much depends on the particular district, school, and teacher where the child might be placed. And sometimes, in spite of the obstacles in teaching the child at home, the opportunity for one-on-one teaching in a supportive and loving environment may be what is best for the child.

· When we compare our child with other children in our overseas community, we think he must have a serious learning problem. It should be remembered that the MKs with whom you make comparisons may not be typical of children the same age back in your home country. The comparison group of MKs may quite possibly be achieving above grade level. This can be due to many factors, including being gifted or above average in ability, because they have benefited from excellent teaching in small classes, at home with an itinerant teacher, or by parents.

Your child may be quite average when compared with the normal population, but may appear to be behind when compared with peers in an MK group. It is important that children with average or slightly below average ability, or those with different learning styles, are not compared and labeled in such a way that they feel inadequate or inferior.

### **Getting Help**

Following are a few suggestions for parents who are faced with decisions regarding the education of a child with special needs.

Pray for wisdom in where and how to seek wise counsel.

Expect that professional educators, psychologists, and administrators (as well as grandparents and others) will have opinions about how best to educate a child with special needs. You—husband and wife together—must sort out the advice you are given. The final decision is yours.

If possible, talk with other parents in similar situations.

Ask the advice of teachers who know your child.

Consult with personnel in your organization who have knowledge about children's education. If possible, request a visit by a specialist who may be able to provide assessment and recommendations on site.

When visiting your home country, take advantage of the resources of public and private schools. In the United States, public schools are required by federal and state laws to provide an assessment under certain conditions. Remember, however, that this takes considerable time and requires you to be in one location for a while. If possible, visit special programs for children who have an exceptionality similar to your child's.

Read two or three books dealing with your category of concern.

### **Selected Resources**

The following are just a few of the many resources addressing children with special needs.

#### **General**

*Exceptional Parent*. P.O. Box 3000, Dept. EP, Denville, NJ 07834. Phone: 1-800-247-8080. \$18.00 per year within the U.S.; \$24.00 overseas. A magazine especially for parents of children with special needs, published eight times per year. This publisher also produces an annual directory of organizations covering nearly every disability.

The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589. Call (703) 264-9467 for subscription and membership fees. This professional organization publishes two journals: *Exceptional Children* and *Teaching Exceptional Children*.

National Handicapped Homeschoolers Association, 814 Shavertown Rd., Boothwyn, PA 19061. This parent-sponsored group publishes a periodic newsletter.

*Educating Exceptional Children* (6th edition), by Samuel A. Kirk and James J. Gallagher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989). Used in teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities. Provides an overview of special education and each of the categories of exceptionality.

### **Technology**

*Closing the Gap*. P.O. Box 68, Henderson, MN 56044. Six issues per year. \$26.00 U.S.; \$41.00 Canada and Mexico; \$50.00 overseas. Up-to-date information on all forms of technological innovations for individuals with special needs: software, hardware, adaptive devices.

*The Catalyst*. Western Center for Microcomputers in Special Education, Inc., 1259 El Camino Real, Suite 275, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Quarterly newsletter. \$10.00 per year U.S.; \$20.00 overseas, including Canada. Comprehensive coverage of microcomputer use in the fields of special education and rehabilitation.

### **Speech and Language**

*If Your Child Stutters: A Guide for Parents*. Stuttering Foundation of America, P.O. Box 11749, Memphis, TN 38111-0749. Publication No. 11 (3rd revised edition). \$1.00. Also available in Spanish and French.

*Stuttering and Your Child: Questions and Answers*. Stuttering Foundation of America, P.O. Box 11749, Memphis, TN 38111-0749. Publication No. 22. \$1.00. For parents and teachers who want to help the child who stutters.

*Speech Correction: Introduction to Speech Pathology* (8th edition), by Charles Van Riper and Lon L. Emerick, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1989). \$50.00. The text is readable and includes many sample dialogues to illustrate therapy procedures.

*Parent Articles: Enhance Parent Involvement in Language Learning*, edited by Margaret Schrader. Communication/Therapy Skill Builders, P.O. Box 42050-P92, Tucson, AZ 85733. Phone: (602) 323-7500. \$45.00. Each article is written especially for parents.

### **Behavior Management**

*Parents Are Teachers: A Child Management Program*, by Wesley C. Becker. Research Press, Dept. B. 2612 N. Mattis Ave., Champaign, IL

61821. Phone: (217) 352-3273. \$11.95. An effective and easy-to-understand child management program designed for parents.

*The Good Kid Book: How to Solve the 16 Most Common Behavior Problems*, by Howard N. Sloane. Research Press, Dept. B. 2612 N. Mattis Ave., Champaign, IL 61821. Phone: (217) 352-3273. \$15.95. An easy-to-read manual for parents.

*Living with Children: New Methods for Parents and Teachers*, by Gerald R. Patterson. Research Press, Dept. B. 2612 N. Mattis Ave., Champaign, IL 61821. Phone: (217) 352-3273. \$11.95. Shows how children learn behavior and then train parents to behave.

### **Learning Disabilities and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**

*Maybe You Know My Kid: A Parents' Guide to Identifying, Understanding and Helping Your Child with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*, by Mary Cahill Fowler. (NY: Birch Lane Press, 1990). Characteristics of the educational and behavioral needs of these children and practical suggestions for coping with them.

*Why Is My Child Having Trouble at School? A Parent's Guide to Learning Disabilities*, by Barbara Z. Novick and Maureen M. Arnold. New York, Villard Books, \$19.00. A practical book for parents. Explains some of the theory behind the concept of learning disabilities, as well as an action program for dealing with this exceptionality.

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## **Part VI: Collaboration**

### Resolution III

#### ***Unity Among Cultural Groups***

Whereas the distinction in the Body of Christ between expatriates and national is artificial and inappropriate, and

Whereas the multicultural experience of MKs gives them a unique potential for contributing to the development of unity between Christians with different cultural backgrounds,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi commit themselves to developing and supporting programs which will enable MKs to foster and model Christian unity and harmonious working relationships between all cultural groups.

### Resolution VIII

#### ***Shared Resources***

We, the delegates of ICMK Nairobi, commit ourselves to a greater degree of inter-mission cooperation and sharing of resources in developing the various programs recommended at this conference.

Resolution XI

***Communication and Cooperation***

In light of the many substantive resolutions affirmed by the delegates of ICMK Nairobi, on behalf of the MKs of the world, we commit ourselves to presenting the issues expressed in these resolutions to those people in the organizations we represent, to enlist their collaborative effort in addressing the yet to be completed work before us.

Resolution VII

***New Sending Countries***

Whereas God the Holy Spirit has sovereignly raised up a powerful missionary force in the Two-Thirds World, and they have their own particular family and MK needs,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi recommend naming a task force of ICMK and the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission to convene a consultation for the Two-Thirds World missionary family needs.

Resolution IX

***MK Research***

Whereas a great deal of research has been done to determine the advantages and disadvantages which accrue to MKs growing up in a multicultural environment, and

Whereas much research has yet to be done in this area to provide further insights into this situation,

The delegates of ICMK Nairobi commit themselves to engage in appropriate, rigorous and systematic research into those additional areas which will enhance the data base and provide for a better understanding of the MK situation.

## 51.

### *MK Research: Notes and Observations*

#### **John R. Powell**

Formal research on MKs has had a rather short and mixed history. Only recently have concentrated and coordinated efforts been made to better understand MKs through research. This chapter gives an overview of research efforts to date, reports recently derived data, and points briefly to future needs.

#### *General Observations*

Until a decade ago there was no coordinated approach for research on MKs and their families. Most research produced between 1934 and 1989 was part of doctoral and master's studies. Most of the writing about MK and missionary families during that period was not research based, and little of the research was empirically based (Andrews, 1989).

During the 1970s, MK research moved into greater depth and wider content areas. Studies by Herrmann (1977), Wickstrom (1978) and later, Wickstrom and Fleck (1983), based on doctoral dissertations, are good examples of increasing breadth and depth. Herrmann's work was solidly designed and was one of few to be theory-based. Wickstrom's design helped tease out significant aspects of boarding school influence and personality characteristics.

Austin's annotated bibliography on re-entry issues (1983) and its addendum (Austin and Gordon, 1986) are good examples of the increasing research of the '70s and early '80s. Hunter's (1993) excellent article provided a sense of direction, and his observation that there is no such thing as a "typical MK" is well taken. He notes: "The psychological doctrine of individual differences is an important reality, since MKs come in every conceivable size, shape and increasingly, color and ethnic origin... What is more, they all come from some type of family" (Hunter, 1993). He further points out the importance of a theoretical perspective in guiding meaningful research.

Findings from the '70s and early '80s stimulated debate as to what outcomes result from being children of missionaries. Attention was given to separations from parents for boarding school, the influence of factors

in the host culture, personal integration of Christian experience, academic outcomes, personality traits, readiness for re-entry, the qualifications for boarding and MK school personnel, and others. Danielson (1981) and Dillon (1983) contributed through their own dissertation-based psychological research. Sharp (1985) constructed a picture of the real MK based on an interpretation of literature available at that time.

The first International Conference on Missionary Kids (ICMK) in Manila in 1984 contributed to increasing this interest. ICMK Quito in 1987 included more focus on emotional, psychosocial, and relational aspects. Delegates at ICMK Nairobi in 1989 voted "...to engage in appropriate, rigorous and systematic research into those additional areas which will enhance the database and provide for better understanding of the MK situation" (Resolution IX).

Formation of the multi-mission MK-CART/CORE (Missionary Kid-Consultation and Research Team/Committee on Research and Endowment) in 1987 brought together representatives from a variety of missions to coordinate and provide direction for research. This group has conducted three major projects driven almost entirely by mission interests and leadership, and has involved as many as twelve mission agencies in coordination of the designs and data gathering.

There is a perceived tension between the purpose and activities of missions and the conduct of solid empirical research. Myers (1997) eloquently pointed this out, citing a difference in the types of people in mission leadership and those in the world of research. He suggested that research can help missions "learn their way into the future" by 1) using research to become more effective communicators; 2) guiding research by what we need to know; and 3) involving those who manage or carry out the decisions or communication processes in missions (Myers, 1997).

Reapsome (1998) has addressed this tension in an *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* editorial, citing difficulties in doing research within missions, and underlining the complementary contributions of clearly *objective* research and concentrated prayer as necessary for success. Tension can be reduced by collaboration between researchers and mission leaders, asking the right questions, conducting the research in a truly competent and Christian manner, and being sensitive in interpreting and applying the results.

### ***A Brief History***

Dr. Leslie Andrews, Director of MK-CART/CORE, identified 181 documents from 1934–1989 including articles, theses, dissertations and some unpublished materials. These *excluded* anecdotal and exhortational pieces but *included* works of a theoretical and/or empirical nature as well as other entries judged to affect missionary families. She located 3 entries from the 1930s, 4 from the 1940s, 8 from the 1950s, and 16 from the 1960s. The increase continued in the 1970s with 36 entries, and rose more sharply in the 1980s, with 114 in that decade.

This rise in MK research has produced significant findings which have influenced mission policy, led to improved care, and deepened our understanding. Earlier research considered the success of MKs, personality development and problems of MKs and their families (1930s), adjustment of MKs to America (1940s), problems of MKs, education of MKs, and the family in foreign missions (1950s). Those from the 1960s were largely concerned with MK education, others on MKs and particular mission groups, and one on parental preparation of MKs for boarding school. The overriding concern was with educational academic outcomes (Andrews, 1989).

Werkman's (1972) article on the hazards of rearing children in foreign countries is representative of a budding concern regarding the effects of growing up overseas. White's (1983) reflections on the separation phenomenon idiosyncratic to missionary children conceptualized concerns which were emerging in conferences, literature, and mission circles. The stimulating article by Ward (1989) articulated elements of dynamics of the "climate of concern" for missionary children.

### ***The Concept of "Third-Culture Kid" (TCK)***

In the 1960s, Dr. Ruth Useem of Michigan State University coined the term "third-culture kid" or TCK, as it has become known (Useem, 1980). Useem found that children who had spent a significant portion of their developmental years in places other than that of their parents' home country developed characteristics distinguishing them from their monocultural peers. TCKs had less than full identification with their passport country, but did not have complete identification with their host culture(s) either. They had a sense of identity with a third culture, which

came from having experienced aspects of at least two cultures for a major part of their developmental years. The third culture is a distinct sense of transcendence from either culture and has a certain distinctiveness in perspective, behavior, identity, and understanding.

Further studies were initiated by Dr. Useem and several of her doctoral students in the '70s and early '80s. Useem sees TCKs as coming from four separate groups: 1) the international business community; 2) missionary families; 3) the diplomatic corps; and 4) children from military families serving overseas. Her research and that of her doctoral students defined and guided research about MKs.

Doris Walters (1996) developed an approach to assisting MKs which makes use of research results and integrates spiritual, psychological and interpersonal aspects of experience in growth, recovery or resolution.

Both experience and research show TCKs to have identifiable characteristics which provide a sense of commonality and relationship. Building on Useem's construct, other research, and personal experience with MKs and their families, David Pollock of Interaction, Inc. has developed a "TCK Profile" (see Chapter 5). His presentation of this data has helped a variety of young people to make successful adaptations to their "home" culture. For some older adult MKs, this information has opened a window of understanding and release.

### ***Uniqueness of Missionary Families***

Missionary families have qualities which distinguish them from the other three expatriate groups to which TCKs belong, as well as from "homeside" families. They are overseas due to a firmly committed sense of mission, undergirded by a deep faith in God and commitment to the spread of the Gospel. It expresses itself in the vocation and career of the parents and usually in family activities, responsibilities, and dynamics. The missions subculture involves the ethos of a specific mission organization, field, educational options, mission strategy, and other related areas. Very little research has been directed toward the specific dynamics of missionary families and their effect on MKs.

Of expatriate groups, mission families are the most dependent on the local economy, have more social constriction (due in part to geographical isolation), use more boarding schools and national schools for children's education, and have the lowest mean family income of all overseas North American groups. Missionary families tend to hold different values toward money and acquisitions, have a high value for humanitarian service, are the most deeply immersed in the host culture, and generally have more autonomy than other expatriate groups. They are more likely to be fluent in the prevailing language(s), stay overseas longer, and develop higher understanding of cultural, language, and attitudinal differences. As a group, their educational level is above that of the average North American, they are likely to have received more direct training for living and working overseas, and maintain a unique support network with their constituents in North America.

### ***The Challenge of Research***

Children growing up in this context have some developmental determinants different than their monocultural peers, so they would be expected to have measurably different developmental outcomes. For example, how do such variables affect such things as personality development, further education, vocational choice, internalized faith, choice of marriage partner, life satisfaction, attitudes toward the church, feelings about self, ability to resolve conflict, or parenting ability?

Hard *empirical* research investigating these variables and their possible influence on MK development has been sparse. In 1986 this author reviewed all entries relating to MKs and missionary families catalogued in the Billy Graham Center Library at Wheaton College. Of the 326 articles, reports, and studies in that collection, less than a dozen met criteria for solid *empirical* research with conceptual development and interpretation. Many were surveys, analyses of personal anecdotes, and organized observations. Few had empirical bases for understanding the nuances and practicalities of MK development.

In recent years, research projects have been published in missions-related literature such as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* and *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. These findings have been

useful to individual MKs, assisted missions in policy review, and have guided further research.

Considerable impetus was given MK research by the three International Conferences on Missionary Kids (ICMKs) during the 1980s. The first two addressed educational issues, boarding school concerns, family considerations, re-entry issues and processes, and mission policies.

### ***Formation of MK-CART/CORE***

In 1987, an inter-mission group composed of representatives from eight mission agencies and six invited researchers met at Nyack, New York. Each mission presented a "white paper" outlining concerns of the mission and questions for research. A consensus was reached about what would be most useful to pursue: a better understanding of boarding schools, qualities needed for effective personnel (teachers, boarding home parents, administrators) and their selection, ongoing development, and long-term tenure for desirable personnel. The means for developing specific research programs were proposed, and an organizational structure formed.

Thus MK-CART/CORE was born. CART stands for the Consultation and Research Team, the group of mission representatives. CORE represents the Committee on Research and Endowment, the individuals responsible for designing and conducting research. Researchers volunteered to contribute their time and expertise without remuneration and met three times a year to design research, assign responsibilities, and for other conceptual and logistical purposes. The entire group met annually to review progress, discuss results, and define further work.

It was agreed that the first reporting of results would be directly to the missions representatives. Researchers would also serve as individual consultants to interpret and apply results pertaining to individual missions. The CORE group outlined ethical codes and policies for use of the resulting databases, encouraging other researchers beyond CART/CORE, and cooperating with other researchers and missions.

### ***The Boarding School Personnel Study***

The first step of this project defined desirable qualities for boarding school personnel and involved a survey of 180 persons who had close acquaintance with boarding schools, namely adult MKs who were former students, parents of present and former students, teachers, administrators and house parents. The results showed some clear and useful distinctions between the school personnel groups (See Powell and Andrews, 1993).

The second step consisted of measuring characteristics of the entire staffs of twenty overseas boarding schools serving MKs. There was high degree of participation by the schools involved, and results were shared with representatives of each mission. School profiles were discussed (with appropriate maintenance of confidentiality), and consultations regarding policies, practices, and potential positive changes were held. Results were distributed within each mission group, and to the larger missions community through journals (Wickstrom, 1983; Taylor and Pollock, 1995).

The most important characteristics of school personnel were not technical skills and competencies, but relational capacities and qualities of character through which came the ability to influence, model, and teach important life truths to students. These qualitative characteristics could be summarized as: 1) the ability to provide a nurturing environment; 2) unusual patience (e.g., being slow to anger, swift to listen, quick to praise); and 3) the ability to set clear personal and interpersonal boundaries and demonstrate balance in their lives.

### ***The Adult MK (AMK) Study***

The second major MK-CART/CORE study focused on adult MKs (AMKs). Previous studies had most often been done with college students and other young adults. There had been no comprehensive study of AMKs across ages, location of service, mission groups (small and large; denominational and nondenominational) with multi-mission participation. There was particular interest in looking at the spiritual, relational, vocational, and life satisfaction variables for such a group, and also identifying both positive and negative aspects of family, school, mission culture, and host culture experiences.

The design included both standardized instruments and researcher-generated items. A pool of more than 12,000 names and addresses of AMKs was assembled from records of the participating missions, including MK school alumni lists and other sources. Questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of 10% ; more than 200 were returned due to incorrect addresses. Exactly 608 completed questionnaires were received, for a return rate from “good” addresses of 58%. This was an excellent return rate for this type of research, but the fact that some 15% of the names were “lost” from MK schools and missions may have other implications which are difficult to discern.

Completed questionnaires were anonymous, but respondents were given the option of volunteering for a semi-structured phone interview by giving their telephone number. More than 83% did so! Many also added notes and letters to the lengthy questionnaire, further describing their experiences as MKs and in later life. Later, a random sample of volunteers for phone interviews was drawn, and more than 50 individual semi-structured interviews of approximately one and a half hours each were conducted.

This project generated a massive amount of data. The initial results were shared in depth with mission representatives over three of the annual MK-CART/CORE meetings, as various contexts were drawn for discussing the results and their meaning. Some findings have been disseminated through other channels (Andrews, 1994a; Andrews, 1994b; Pauls and Pauls, 1993; Andrews, 1995; Powell, 1996; Wickstrom, 1998).

### ***Educational and Career Choices***

Findings from this study can be summarized in several categories. The first relates to *educational and career choice outcomes*. Ninety-four percent of respondents had attended or were currently attending college or university. Some were not yet old enough to have completed college and may have been attending college at the time of the study. Forty-four percent of AMKs report receiving academic scholarships, 6% athletic scholarships, and 2% music scholarships. Eleven percent were named to “Who’s Who in American Colleges and Universities,” 33% majored in Bible, theology, Christian education or related Christian service fields in college, and 4% hold earned doctoral degrees.

Some 73% reported attending boarding school as boarders at some time and 7% attended boarding schools as non-boarders. The remaining 20% presumably used educational options such as international schools, national schools, or other arrangements. Of those completing the study, 48% had entered boarding school prior to grade 4 (Andrews, 1994a).

Although findings of previous studies varied regarding the effect of boarding school, the age of entry, and other factors (e.g., Schipper, 1977; Wickstrom, 1978; Sharp, 1985), this study found no statistically significant differences between boarders and non-boarders on ten present-life satisfaction scales. However, one must be aware of individual differences.

Vocationally, 16% of the AMK sample indicated missionary service, and 36% (including those in mission service) are in a full-time Christian vocation. As Useem had found in her earlier research, well over half are in a vocation which in some way touches on international factors. Of the 10 life satisfaction variables, career satisfaction was fourth from the top.

### ***Life Satisfaction and Related Variables***

Present satisfaction with ten “life satisfaction variables” was measured as a part of this study. Combining the responses of all AMKs sampled, the ten areas were ranked, number 1 being the most satisfying: 1) children; 2) family of origin; 3) dating/marriage; 4) career; 5) extended family; 6) friendships; 7) peer relationships; 8) relationship with parents’ mission agency; 9) church; and, 10) community. While attending or graduating from college seemed to make little difference in life satisfaction on most variables, those who *never* attended college showed significantly higher satisfaction with their careers than all other AMKs combined.

Women reported greater satisfaction with their families of origin, friendships, and their parents’ mission agencies than did men. Some 55% of the AMKs indicated that their parents included them in their ministries, and those who had been included showed significantly higher satisfaction on all 10 variables than those who had not (Andrews, 1994b). When those participating in the interviews were asked who had influenced them the most when they were growing up, by far the greatest number (38%) said it was their father (Wickstrom, 1998).

Researchers concluded that the family was the most significant and influential agent in the development of the MK, in spite of the great importance of a multitude of other factors. The mission subculture, school environment, host culture, conveyance of the “home” culture, intrafamily dynamics, and the normal bumps and bruises of growing up, affect MK development, but the family appears to outweigh all others in its influence.

### ***Unusual Stress, Abuse and Trauma in MKs***

The AMK study provided empirical evidence for the existence of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse from within the family, within the mission, by school personnel, and from nationals. There had been exposure to natural disasters, physical deprivation, terror, robbery, assault, rape, the witnessing of violence toward others, and other events which may have had lasting effects upon the victims. The frequency of personal stress, abuse, and trauma perpetrated by those with whom the MK had some relationship was at a level lower than experienced by the general North American population.

The study also revealed other types of stress, abuse, and trauma such as lack of deserved empathy and compassion by significant caregivers, harsh punishment, lack of respect, sustained exposure to unhealthy rigidity, emotional abandonment by a parent or parents, and other behaviors resulting in trauma from which some are still recovering. Some AMKs indicated that the response by mission representatives, from others within the mission, and interaction with the mission subculture itself sometimes complicated or even added to the trauma.

Data from the study provided useful information on the type and frequency of such occurrences, but written comments and phone interviews gave a more poignant picture of human suffering from these untoward events. The interviewers were impressed by the candor, honesty, and resilience shown by nearly all of those who had experienced such events. In a few instances there was a feeling of alienation or abandonment by God, anger at the mission and/or the parents and family, and bitterness toward the church. There may be a larger number of AMKs so affected, but who did not participate in the research.

While these events are not normative to the MK experience, there was sufficient indication to be of concern. Time was spent with mission representatives, discussing the data and implications. Many MKs said it had required effort to understand their MK experience and how it has affected them. The great majority were positive about this “working through” experience, and it is a growth process which occurs for most individuals, whether MKs or not.

Researchers in CART/CORE believe that their findings promote positive steps in reducing severe stress and abuse. Steps are being taken to provide more effective assistance and reduce the effects of trauma which occurs within the host culture, natural disasters, accidents and other “external” events.

### ***The Missionary Family Study***

As a third major study, MK-CART/CORE is pursuing a number of questions related to missionary families. Data have been collected from 10 cooperating missions. Those being studied are missionary families, including any children 15 and older making their primary home with the family. Initial results should be available in late 1998.

### ***Concluding Observations***

This chapter has given a brief overview of significant developments, not a comprehensive review of MK research literature. Other important references were not covered.

Research which will help in understanding MKs and their families and can be applied to mission policies and practices continues to present a challenge. More detailed knowledge is needed about relationships, family dynamics, and a host of other variables. Findings from such research have the potential to enhance development, help prevent untoward events, and guide intervention and resolution. Further research may contribute to the current member-care movement in missions.

Overall, our best understanding from research is that MKs have a number of characteristics, rich in quality and representative of varied individual differences, which are distinct from many of those in their monocultural peer group. Yet, they also have much in common with these peers. Part of the research task is to further distinguish those which

are uniquely associated with the MK experience and those which fit on the pathways of development for most people.

So far, research indicates that the majority of MKs have made faith in Christ their own, and are nurturing and personally integrating it. Most seem to recognize this as a life-long process and a significant number (36%) express it in Christian vocations. Some have rejected it, and still others struggle with aspects of it.

Many research questions remain to be formulated and answered, but progress in MK research over the last decade and a half offers much to build upon.

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## 52.

### *Doing Research Together*

#### **Ted Ward**

My professional career has centered on research and the development of international leaders who use their research skills to deal with long-range planning. During thirty years at MSU I have been assigned to projects in over sixty countries. In every case, my professional service and Christian ministry have gone hand-in-hand.

I'm not a quantitative researcher; I'm more of an anthropologist than a statistician. I am more dedicated to good descriptive research—the school of social science which says that before you can do good research you have to have good hypotheses, based on descriptive work, which may be based on anecdotal reporting. All of us can contribute to this accumulation of knowledge, no matter what our expertise. I have encouraged people of all sorts to contribute by doing careful case studies. Almost anyone can learn to describe somewhat objectively what is going on in their immediate experience.

We need a passion for the problem, rather than a passionate commitment to a given solution. Sometimes we are so anxious to get to a solution that we don't take time to get thoroughly involved in the problem. Sometimes a particular answer is promoted before anyone really knows what the question is. Most of us have a tendency to oversimplify things and give stereotyped answers to complex problems.

Naming things well is important to research. Changing what something is called doesn't change its nature: for example, "third world" vs. "two-thirds world." But it may change our perception of it; and naming is usually the best place to start improving our understanding. One of the first things God did with Adam was put him to work as a researcher. Adam didn't have much to go on—there wasn't a lot of previous data, and Adam couldn't go to a library. But God gave him an assignment of *taxonomy*: naming the animals. Almost anyone can start with that. Name your universe. See what is there and call it something. Doing that well is an important task.

Our task of research is huge, and needs to engage many people. Research should not be presented as a highly technical enterprise which intends to exclude most people. My hope is that we may become as communicative as possible to anyone who is willing to listen and think. Thinking is one thing I always demand of people; it may not always be comfortable, but it is good because it exalts the Lord who made us. I take a creational and redemptive approach to research. Part of our task is to start with what we find in God's creation and appropriate it in a redemptive way, so that the mercy and grace of God can flow more effectively toward and through it.

I am not convinced that evaluative research is very helpful. Evaluative studies tend to be very short-sighted and simply inform executive decisions within a given moment. They usually have relatively little generalizable value. Many managers actually are thinking about *evaluation* when they talk about "research." They want you to evaluate something as a researcher, especially if your study can demonstrate what they already believe, and you promise not to release it unless it does!

### **Biases About Research**

Some biases: If we are to do international collaboration, we first need to understand our own biases about research. In approaching other cultures, we must remember that different countries have very different approaches to what research is or should be, and the biases usually reflect particular cultural postures. We North Americans bring a rational, reasoned approach, and people from many other cultures bring a more historical, emotive, systemic approach, which could almost be seen as lore.

There are certain kinds of research which are a lot more worthy of our attention than others. I want to name some kinds of research which make sense within scope and function of the concern we have for the missionary family, the missionary kid, and the missionary social system.

All the types of research I will list have both purposive and methodological implications, but this is not a taxonomy of methods. I am simply naming some of the kinds of research that help us understand the world we are dealing with at this conference.

### **Types of Research**

**1. Problem-centered diagnostic studies.** They describe a contemporary problem and elaborate on it, and don't add a lot. If done well, a by-product is that the researcher develops better inquiry techniques which are then available to others and may spawn a generation of inquiries which have some comparability. This process builds perspective.

**2. Facilitational or strategy-centered studies.** These are what institutions will settle for, if what they think they need is evaluative studies. Facilitational studies tell what works and doesn't work; e.g., the church growth research looks at what is going on to see if it has certain kinds of impacts or consequences.

**3. Family systems studies.** We need good comparative and correlational studies in family systems. Some very interesting international studies could be done. Some of the best international comparative work has been done on national school systems, particularly in the western nations; e.g., schools in Sweden compared to schools in the U.S. Vast human resources are invested in the study of intercultural matters, but somehow in the missions enterprise we seem to be satisfied with just muddling through without really examining what is going on.

**4. Organizational development factors studies.** One example would be a study of the missionary family and the organizational development circumstances within which the family functions.

**5. Social system analysis.** This is closely related to the previous type; e.g., looking at the family as system, and studying systems within systems, and how they impact one another. These studies would try to track things from one level of a system to another level. One of my passionate concerns is how mission policy affects mission systems, which affect both schools and families. In turn, they affect not only the effectiveness but sometimes even the health and morale of missionaries and their children.

**6. Longitudinal studies.** This is one of my favorites. In social science, some of the most important breakthroughs have been made in longitudinal, developmental studies. They are rarely done as doctoral dissertations or master's theses because they take too long. These can be

done particularly well by groups of professionals who deal with common issues and problems and who want to make a contribution.

Longitudinal studies follow events as they unfold over time. By contrast, most low-cost research involves cross-sectional or “slice of time” studies, such as comparing seniors to freshmen and assuming that this will show what happens to students while they are in school. The results are not often valid because the seniors are different people than the freshmen; you commit all sorts of logical and structural errors in the design. Unfortunately, this describes a lot of master’s theses. Sincere, hard-working people commit even more gross structural errors and put them to high mathematical test, and the results are called doctoral dissertations! However, we must be thankful that even if not always sound, research does get done by graduate students.

**7. Instrument development.** This type of research is a by-product of any or all of the above. We should try for instrument development by-products whenever possible, because they facilitate replication and collaboration. Instruments help us share inquiries across cultural lines.

One category I have not included is surveys. I don’t have a lot of patience with surveys. Someone talked about whether we might wear people out if we do too much research. Anemic master’s level survey studies have everyone worn out! We need to get beyond that level and get on to more intensive work. There is much more value in close-up ethnographic work and interview studies that are really careful and thorough.

Survey research can’t be done well unless the important variables are already rather well documented. You identify the variables through evidence from other descriptive research. We should not despise the study that only looks at twelve cases, or only one school, or at one family over a period of time. Much more will be seen there than in broad surveys which ask questions that don’t make a lot of sense, but are then subjected to elaborate number-crunching in elegant computers.

### ***Goals of International Collaboration***

What do we mean by international collaboration? There are several specific goals we should think of in terms of international collaboration.

***Complementing one another, not duplicating.*** There is a great deal of difference in how we look at things. In working with Europeans, you have to respect their approach and methodology, then find ways to complement their studies. The difference in how we do research is partly cultural, but probably more specifically in the nature of our training. There are many different research traditions in which people are trained, and some of them are quite narrow, with their own unique definitions of the word “research.” If the same situation is studied from several different perspectives, the result is a more textured or three-dimensional view, while allowing for differences of approach to the same problem. But in order to do that, we have to back off from the proprietary stance which is characteristic of some of our studies.

***Replicating for comparative purposes.*** This means doing it over again, either in the same context to see how it holds up (How reliable is it? Is it observed the same way twice?) or replicating it in another situation for comparison. Replication is the fountainhead of good comparative studies. It is always a good idea to design a study in such a way that it could be replicated. Discipline yourself to stay away from peculiar things that exist in a particular environment and don’t exist anywhere else. A lot of participant-observer studies can’t be replicated because another researcher can’t enter a different environment in the same way.

***Reciprocation vs. exploitation.*** Exploitation is what we do when we manipulate other people into collecting our data. A lot of people think of international collaboration in research in those sorts of terms: I’ll get people from various places to collect data, and then it will be an international study. There is a huge difference between simply getting others to help carry out a study and finding people who can relate as peers in a project and thus building true research reciprocity.

### ***Problems of International Collaboration***

Putting a high value on doing research together with people of other cultures or nationalities is not without serious challenges. I will mention some I have encountered.

### ***Differences in Priorities***

Whenever there is international or intercultural collaboration (e.g., an American working with an Australian) there will be differences in priorities such as the following:

***Topical dissonances.*** We have different ways of defining things. We differ in how we name something or what we think it is. The concepts “personality,” or “motivation” just do not transfer into some cultures. They don’t think in that way. The notion of “truth” or “integrity” doesn’t go across all cultural lines. For example, I have dealt with several students from a culture where quoting someone without giving credit to the source is seen as the highest compliment. To give citations would be a lesser honor. In the U.S. we call that plagiarism. In general in Arabic cultures, you give honor to people by using their words, and you defame them if you use a citation, because that suggests the whole world doesn’t already know it has been said by a certain worthy person.

***Notions of sequence.*** Americans like to say, “We have a very logical approach: let’s get to the bottom of this and then work our way back up.” We tend not to look thoroughly at the presenting symptom; we want to go to its origin and then come back at it. Many people in the world start in a different place in that sequence. Sometimes you are amazed to see a researcher from another culture doing something that you believe is wrong. But the other person is looking at your work saying the same thing! It takes a certain amount of broad-mindedness to truly collaborate, because you will each do things that are stupid in the eyes of the other. This is difficult for both.

***The importance of specific studies.*** What is most important to get at? Americans have very different ideas about what the important variables are. People from other cultures may have their own sense of priorities. When people of other cultures tell us what they think the important variables are, we can get some good insights.

### ***Epistemological Differences***

***Narrative representation.*** Americans tend not to think in terms of narrative representation. A high percentage of other cultures do think in

terms of narrative representation as a valid way to describe. We tend to think that unless you have numbers, tables, and percentages, you haven’t done a good job of research. Many people will reject that and go back to narrative or descriptive styles, where the value of the story to be told is the central thing.

The work of Oscar Lewis is exemplary of a Latin American ethnographer: he simply tells the story. His work reads like novels. There is almost the excitement of fiction when you read what he writes, because it is so “alive.” Commitment to evidence from the family system in the family context is important, but the story must be told so that the rank-and-file person can read it, enjoy it, grasp it, and be edified by it. As researchers, we dare not become so arcane and remote that we can only talk with each other.

***Cause-and-effect diagnostic paradigms.*** Westerners generally think in terms of cause and effect. The vast majority of this world thinks in terms of the Islamic phrase, “Allah wills it.” This presupposition is not a cause/effect statement; don’t assume that Allah is cause and what happened is effect. It is a different kind of epistemology which says not to worry yourself with *why*. Allah wills it; you need not be concerned. God takes care of his business; we take care of our business.

In Western culture, we always assume there is an identifiable cause somewhere and we just need to find it. That fetish will drive us in opposite directions from many potential international collaborators.

***Meaning of intellectual curiosity.*** Intellectual curiosity drives a lot of us, including many who are not researchers. For Westerners, research is a healthy manifestation of intellectual curiosity. However, in many cultures intellectual curiosity is not the driving force. They use their minds for things that make more sense in their context. Inquiry has a different purpose for many people. Even rationality has a different shape for various people.

### ***Organizational Motives***

***Motives for doing research.*** Here I’m talking about motivations of the sponsors of research, not structural differences in organizations. For example, very few intercultural Christian organizations understand

research as having an academic value or contributing to literature. Third-world organizations don't tend to think that way at all. Internal enlightenment is usually more important—"We will be better people if we know." That is not radically different from the Western notion that we are able to *use* knowledge, but we Americans take a particularly pragmatic view. We have a control-oriented view of research; knowledge gives us power and control.

I try to teach my Christian researchers that there is a worshipful quality in knowledge and learning. Aspects of the image of God are expressed as human beings utilize all the attributes that God has created—including intellect, understanding, and the capacity to know. I try to steer people away from a pragmatic need to know in order to change things, control things, or do things differently. Indeed, change may be an outcome, but if it is made to be the primary goal, it becomes a god and will be seen as such by people of other cultures.

**Orientation to problem-solving.** Western people and people educated in the West presume that problem-solving is one of the divine prerogatives of humankind. I happen to think problem-solving is a great thing, but there are a lot of people in this world who don't. Problems are not there to be solved; they are to be dealt with because they build character—"tribulation works patience." In the biblical statement, tribulation isn't a problem to be solved; it is something to be appreciated because it develops patience. Orientation to problem-solving is very different across cultures.

You may think all of these matters are abstract and impractical, that they won't make any difference in what you are doing. But if you try to practice international collaboration in research, these differences can rise up and bite you in the nose!

**The style of research itself.** There is a continuum between planned research and emergent research. I try to teach my students to plan research with as much vigor as they carry it out, because I am very Western and very American. Our approach is to anticipate and resolve a lot of problems so they won't cause trouble later on. That is quite atypical of research around the world. In other cultures, the plan is very brief and is a starting place for a sort of heuristic exercise—we will study some things, and they will lead us to other things, and ultimately we will

become internally enlightened. Marvelous idea! Drives me nuts! I tend to be very planned, not emergent, but if you get into international collaboration, that will become an issue, and you will need to do some give and take.

These differences are not obstacles to be overcome; they add a great deal to the richness and enlightenment of research, but it requires patience and respect in order to receive the benefits of international collaboration.

### **Potential Solutions**

**Learn how to learn each other's techniques.** If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Get on the same wave length; learn to do it their way so you get pretty good at it, and people will accept and respect you more.

**Learn to complement one another's work.** Work with someone from your own culture to practice those skills. You look at it this way; I'll look at it that way. You look at these subjects; I'll look at those. Then we'll look at each other's results and see what we can put together. This is peer teamwork.

### **What Is the Future for Intercultural Collaboration?**

First, we will experience some *side-by-side discoveries* that could be a lot of fun. What we are talking about is not at all frightening, though it may be uncomfortable from time to time.

Second, we will produce some by-products of the experiences themselves, such as *comparable case literature*. How we need good case literature, both for training and for the research value! For many years, I have been challenging Christian organizations to put some of their people to work writing up what they are doing. There is no other sector of society that spends so much money and commands the resources of so many people as the missionary movement, but which has so little case documentation to show for it. People say, "But that doesn't win souls." Now, wait a minute—it can make us more aware, more insightful, more able to cope. It could in the long run be one of the reasons we're not winning more souls.

I am not talking about a single-logic research. For example, the church growth philosophy is a kind of single-track research paradigm which has a very limited value in the long run. We need more creative approaches.

There is the possibility of doing *intercultural analyses*, so we could have a better feel for what it is that makes certain situations different from others. Missionaries are quick to say this place is different from that place, and these people are different from those people, but not very often do we find good material about what makes them different and what is underneath the presenting symptoms of their differences.

I always hear, “These people are not interested in so-and-so; you can’t give them this; they won’t take that.” I wonder what’s underneath that, and how deep it is. There may be a very shallow structure and the behavior would be easy to change — they don’t eat ice cream because they have never seen it before. If they aren’t interested in Jesus Christ, how deep is the structure underneath that? Sometimes we don’t know that, and we plod up the wrong hill. *We need good comparable case literature and intercultural analyses.*

We need to know what phenomenologies are cross-cultural. I am using the term cross-cultural in the sense of things that are true across cultures. Intercultural has to do with when cultures come together. We have intercultural differences and cross-cultural similarities. Think of “inter” as interact—and sometimes interfere!—those are intercultural issues. Cross-cultural matters are such things as the fact that all societies have family structures. The concept of the nuclear family is an intercultural problem in a society of extended families.

Things that are different on the surface may nevertheless be indicative of phenomenologies that are common. Everyone the world over is concerned about dressing in such a way as to accommodate the weather. Some people don’t wear much clothing because it’s a lot more comfortable not to. But compare that to the Eskimo; weather makes the difference.

We all have domiciles; we all have families; there are a lot of things that are structurally common across cultures. We need to see the cross-cultural aspects of human experience so that we can know what bridges are needed. In any kind of missiological work bridges are crucial.

The best example in Scripture is when Paul came to Athens and was aghast at the idolatry. Nonetheless, he forced himself to spend time studying the idols. In doing so, he discovered the little plaque, “To the unknown god” and that became his bridge. God gave Paul a bridge in the cross-culturalness of religion. The differences between monotheism and polytheistic idolatry are an intercultural problem. But Paul didn’t get hung up on that; he used cross-culturalness as a witness to the transcendent God. That kind of thinking is something we need to build more strongly into our tradition, whether we are talking about MKs or other mission issues.

There are some transcultural incentives and motives, not only for research but for specifics like families. We need to know what the transcultural incentives are. What is it to be a Christian? By transcultural I mean some stance that is inherently above culture. I think there is a culture above culture. The rudiments of the Kingdom of God are a map of a culture that is above culture. I can have one foot in the American culture, but I need to have the other foot in the transculturalness of being Christian. What are transcultural incentives we have for our phenomenology, and ultimately what are the transcultural values? That can come out of collaborative research; it will never come out of monocultural research.

### *A Few Nagging Issues*

There are some things we may need to deal with before we mount any significant international research studies.

First, you have to come to grips with *fundamental value differences*. For example, “family” is cross-cultural, but what we value in families from one culture to another can be wildly different. For Americans, family is relatively less important—even though our presidents keep telling us otherwise. Americans, along with Australians, are probably at the bottom of the heap when it comes to family values. Most of the rest of the world has a keener appreciation for family values. Another example is the spirit world. Most of the rest of the world has a keener appreciation for the spirit world. Only among Americans and

some Western Europeans do you have to argue for the possibility that there is a God.

In matters like this, we first have to know where we are. Not many of us are really sensitive to our values and how they are defined. We have a lot of homework to do in that area.

There are also significant *conceptual differences*. For example, our concept of what is worth resolving or answering, and how do we identify an answerable question? We need to get better acquainted with ourselves in that matter.

We also need to better understand our own curiosity. To what extent is our curiosity exploitative?

Being willing to be self-critical; to see one's own culture as noble and worthy (though peculiar, unique, and not at all the ideal for the world)—these are the foundations for effective international collaboration in research.

Based on a presentation at ICMK Nairobi, November 1989.

## 53.

### *Development of Regional Networks*

David K. Wilcox

#### *The Post-ICMK Conferences: Promoting MK Ministry Through Networking, Professional Development, and Inspiration*

At the conclusion of ICMK Nairobi, delegates felt that they were part of a worldwide ministry. They expressed a desire to stay in contact with colleagues of common vision and purpose. But commitment to the conference resolutions and a new sense of community and collaborative purpose did not mean that a fourth ICMK should be planned. A better way to carry out the purposes of the three ICMKs would be through regional conferences and activities.

Perhaps the greatest factor pointing to a change in direction was that the ICMK conferences had achieved their objective of sensitizing the missions community to issues of member care and nurture. For the next steps, regional conferences would allow for greater interaction and more region-specific solutions. Regional conferences would allow more participants to be involved. This article will provide an overview of the regional conferences and other developments since ICMK Nairobi. We will see how these efforts have contributed to MK ministries and well-being, and make suggestions for future conference planning.

#### *Development of Regional Conferences*

In each region of the world, the implementation of ICMK resolutions and the development of improved responses to MK needs has been shared by several types of groups: MK schools, mission agencies, and other supporting organizations. MK schools have taken the lead in an ongoing response to the needs of MKs. With budgets which allowed for staff development activities and a vested interest staying up to date on trends in MK ministry, these schools have encouraged their staff to participate in the conferences.

ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International), and more specifically ACSI's International Ministries Office, is an association devoted to the Great Commission through education and discipleship in the Christian school context, and to professional development of

Christian educators. ACSI's International Ministries Office promoted the formation of the MKOA (Missionary Kids of the Americas) and the MKEA (Missionary Kids of Europe and Africa) regional conferences and has served as the facilitator of recent MCOS (Missionary/ Christian Overseas Schools in Asia) conferences as well.

### *East Asia and the Pacific Islands*

The East Asia/Pacific Islands region has been blessed for over twenty years with a strong, informal network of MK school administrators and mission representatives. This group of administrators was central to the organization of the 1984 ICMK in Manila. Schools in Asia have valued collaborative efforts and have seen their individual efforts as contributing to the broader mission community's best interests.

The fellowship called itself MKOS (Missionary Kids Overseas Schools) until 1994, when it changed its name to MCOS (Missionary/Christian Overseas Schools).

MCOS is an informal fellowship of persons involved in TCK ministry in Asia. Each participating school has a vote in determining the activities of the fellowship which, at the time of this writing, include the planning for each year's administrator conference and any additional conferences deemed beneficial to the participating schools. Through 1996, this fellowship consisted almost exclusively of Western participants. In 1997, personnel from Asian international schools participated as well, marking an exciting redefinition of networking and collaboration.

The expansion of participation developed in stages. As missionaries are being sent from more nations and in greater numbers, the MK and MK-educator population has grown. Also, as schools recognized the validity of the redefinition of some MK issues as TCK issues, the agendas of MCOS gatherings were attractive to a wider range of schools.

Thus, when the leaders of Buah Hati, a Christian international school in Indonesia serving a predominately Asian expatriate community, heard that the topic for MCOS '97 was improving instructional supervision in the international Christian school, they wanted to attend. What was even more exciting was that their participation was warmly received. The common vision of the schools participating in MCOS events is a desire to explore expatriate educational and nurturing issues from a Christian

perspective, as well as to develop relationships with colleagues in common ministry.

MCOS meets annually, usually at the MK/international Christian school closest to the EARCOS (East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools) annual meeting. It has varied from a one-day gathering of administrators and curriculum coordinators for informal sharing and prayer, to hosting large conferences for MK educators and boarding home personnel. In 1990 MKOS met at Dalat School in Penang, Malaysia, with about 30 in attendance. The meetings were largely devotional and job-alike sessions.

The 1991 MKOS conference was held at Morrison Academy in Taichung, Taiwan. Since the host was a large school with an active interest in improving ESL instruction, the invitation was opened to anyone who was interested, not just MK administrators. Over ninety people participated, including many from the host school.

The MKOS conference that year concentrated on ways to serve a more multinational missions community and how to do so from a distinctively Christian perspective. The topics included developing culturally sensitive curriculum, improving ESL instruction, and improving boarding services.

In 1992 Dalat School again sponsored MKOS, but this time the conference was in Bangkok, Thailand. In 1993 MKOS was hosted by the Network of International Schools in Singapore, with over fifty attending. In January 1994, ACSI and Faith Academy co-hosted a conference for the professional development of boarding home parents serving in MK schools throughout the region. That conference was followed by MCOS conferences in Bali (November 1994), Beijing (November 1995), the large MCOS conference at Faith Academy (December 29, 1996– January 1, 1997), and at Dalat School in November, 1997.

MCOS '97 was unique in that the program was designed to qualify for graduate credit through Simpson College of Redding, California. Participants received either one or two graduate hours of credit, depending on the amount of extra reading and projects they did. Tentative plans are underway for the next major MCOS conference to be held at Morrison Academy in early January, 2000.

The MCOS conferences have promoted MK ministry in several ways. First they have addressed the implications of a multinational missions community. The conference topics have reflected the schools' desires to improve ESL programs, internationalize the curriculum (or at least make it more culturally sensitive), and learn how to serve students from differing national backgrounds. Second, the conferences have spread the word about the success of innovative programs such as Ukarumpa (Papua New Guinea) International School's Mother Tongue Studies program developed by Toshio Nagai and others. Third, the improved communication among teachers of similar subjects and among boarding home parents working throughout the region has promoted school-to-school contacts. Finally, those involved in MK education have been challenged as they hear of MK schools with different admission policies, models for curriculum, models of boarding care, and views about the role of the missionary and Christian schools in the Asian context.

### *Latin America*

The ICMK Quito conference in January 1987 marked the beginning of significant networking in that region. However, it was not until several years later that the MK school administrators in the region planned further activities and conferences. In 1992, the ACSI Missions Office, under the leadership of Dr. Philip Renicks and his assistant, Richard Edlin, initiated the MKOA International Steering Committee for conference planning. The result was MKOA '93 in Quito, and was jointly sponsored by the Alliance Academy and ACSI.

The MKOA conference steering committee, a self-perpetuating committee consisting of one representative from each of the four sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, a mission representative, plus an ACSI representative, seeks to organize conferences once every three years. The sites of the conferences will be rotated throughout the region. Hence, MKOA 1993 was in Quito, Ecuador; MKOA 1996 was in Guatemala, and MKOA 1999 will be in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

MKOA 1993 served as a wonderful meeting place for MK educators and caregivers who had never before met with colleagues in other schools in the region. Interaction between missionaries with similar ministries

was the highlight of the conference. But beyond the networking, several other important decisions were made. First was the decision for the MKOA administrators to meet yearly in conjunction with an ACSI teachers convention. The administrators agreed to use that venue to recruit teachers at a job fair immediately following the conference, and to meet for fellowship and professional growth. The ACSI MK school recruiting fairs have continued since then, with participation by MK school administrators from around the world as well as home office mission personnel recruiters.

The second development from MKOA '93 was the establishment of the MK Educators' Consultation. The consultation provides a forum where home office mission staff with responsibility for MK education can meet to discuss each one's common interests. Another goal is to encourage missions to share initiatives they have developed in MK education in order to improve services to MKs in other missions as well<sup>1</sup>. Since 1994, the MK Educators Consultation has divided into two meetings. One is the MK Caregivers Consultation and the other is the Intermission MK Education Consultation. These separate meetings focus on distinct aspects of MK ministry.

MKOA 1996 in Guatemala emphasized the importance of developing MK educational programs which are foundationally Christian, and boarding care which is grounded in a clear understanding of the developmental needs of TCKs. The MK educators heard how different schools integrated their faith with their educational programs and ministries. Dr. Harro van Brummelen of Trinity Western University and Dr. Jack Layman of Columbia International University provided the professional expertise to help MK educators see the importance of building a biblical framework for our ministries. Dr. John R. Powell and Rev. David C. Pollock introduced many participants to the issues of TCKs and to MK-CART/CORE research.

The 1999 MKOA conference in Bolivia will examine how educators and caregivers can respond to the unique needs of students by understanding their backgrounds and learning styles. Many of the same trends seen in the MCOS region can be seen in the MKOA region as well. The MKs who make up our missions communities are increasingly diverse in background, and their families have ever-increasing expectations about

the quality of education and care. The MKOA conferences have been successful (in spite of high travel costs for participants) because they enable MK educators and caregivers to find out what others are doing. In both Asia and Latin America, the distance between schools means that inter-MK school student activities are rarely possible, and networking remains at the professional level only.

### *Europe and Africa*

This vast region of the world includes all of Africa and Europe, as well as the growing expatriate Christian communities serving in the Commonwealth of Independent States. With schools spanning the distance from Portugal to the CIS and from Norway to South Africa, generalizations about the effectiveness of events since ICMK Nairobi are difficult to make. But there is much to rejoice about, and certainly much to be accomplished.

ACSI invited MK school administrators from Africa and Europe to plan the first MKEA conference in 1995. Black Forest Academy agreed to host the conference. BFA has consistently supported international Christian education and MK ministries throughout the region. Speakers included Richard J. Edlin of ACSI and SIM, Dr. George Durance of BFA, Dr. Jay Kesler of Taylor University, and Dr. Jim Plueddmann, General Director of SIM International. MK educators and caregivers chose from over forty workshops on topics including school accreditation, the advantages of off-campus boarding programs, TCK transition issues (led by David C. Pollock), and how to teach reading more effectively. The conference included teachers (165), boarding home parents (41), school administrators (57), mission representatives (33), and counselors (30). Of the 294 participants, 167 served in Europe and 88 served in Africa.

Since MKEA '95 there has been a flurry of activity and initiatives in support of ministry to MKs. In Africa, the International Christian Academy of Côte d'Ivoire hosted a conference led by Dr. John R. Powell for all MK schools in West Africa, with over 90 attending. The conference addressed MK and family issues in order to promote healthy families in ministry. In 1997, MK school administrators in East Africa met at Rift Valley Academy.

In Europe, mission leaders have been sensitized to the importance of MK and member-care issues. Expatriate Christian workers have increasingly moved eastward. That trend, plus the numerical growth in missionaries throughout the region, has heightened the profile of MK ministry issues. Another new initiative on behalf of MK ministry is SHARE (Sharing, Helps and Alternative Resources in Education). This new ministry supports and equips families who are using nontraditional educational alternatives for their children, or who need guidance while in national schools. SHARE also helps clusters of families begin new schools. SHARE's ministry to families has proven vital for several reasons: 1) expatriate Christian workers often live in areas without traditional MK options; 2) national Christian schools are a more acceptable option than in many other locations of the world, and 3) there is increased viability of new educational delivery systems for families.

Another initiative in the MKEA region was the first ACSI Administrators Conference, which was held at the Foreign Missions Club in London in April 1997. The 16 MK schools which participated expressed the desire for administrators' conferences to meet each year the major regional conference did. At that administrators conference the MK and international Christian schools of Europe asked ACSI to establish a regional office in Europe with a full-time director. This office opens in late 1998, to support international Christian schools by sponsoring conferences, professional development activities, and networking in such areas as inter-school student activities and a regional newsletter.

MKEA '98, also at Black Forest Academy in Germany, served those ministering in MK education and caregiving in several ways. The conference was a time of spiritual refreshment through the preaching of Dr. Joseph Stowell, president of Moody Bible Institute. It also provided workshops which were specifically designed to improve the ministries of people involved in MK education and care. Third, the conference challenged educators were to address the resolutions passed at ICMK Nairobi. Philip Billing, Director of the Murree Christian School, presented his school's attempt to serve the multinational missions community more effectively.

The impact of post-ICMK conferences and other initiatives in the MKEA region have been dramatic, supporting networking, sharing,

professional growth, and the re-establishment of vision. Schools have expressed a desire for more interaction and exchanges. Mission agencies have supported their personnel's involvement in the conferences, recognizing the importance of joint efforts in support of families serving in the region.

### ***Why Have Regional Conferences Flourished?***

Dr. David Greenhalgh of Eastern College called the resolutions passed at the Nairobi ICMK conference a positive structure for action planning by MK schools and missions.<sup>2</sup> Post-ICMK conferences have facilitated the achievement of the resolutions, and are themselves one of the outcomes recommended in resolutions VIII and XII. They have served as a way to monitor progress in meeting the goals of the resolutions.

The post-ICMK conferences have also served the missions community by rekindling the vision of the original ICMK organizers and by introducing new MK educators and caregivers to the values and goals of those who came before them. At each regional conference a majority of delegates were attending their first regional conference, reflecting the significant personnel turnover experienced by the schools and sending agencies.

Regional conferences have also provided professional development opportunities for their MK educators and caregivers. For long-term MK educators and boarding home parents, the regional conferences have helped provide a link with professional networks in their home countries, and have thereby promoted continuance in overseas service. The conferences are one of the few sources of professional development for people currently overseas.

Each event has served as a vehicle to introduce a new group of MK educators and caregivers to the progress made to date in improving care for our missionaries' children. That has meant revisiting "old" material so that people share a common vocabulary. More important, the conferences have provided a sense of identity for people in MK ministry as part of a worldwide movement which is central to the Great Commission.

### ***Planning for Regional Networks***

This review of the post-ICMK conferences was descriptive and analytical. The final section of this essay is intended to all those in MK ministry who desire to see the regional conferences continue in support of MK ministry and care. ACSI offers the service of regional MK conference planning as one of its membership benefits, and serves as the sponsoring agency for these conferences. However, it serves in a facilitating role; the steering committee of each region sets the agenda of the conferences. The following recommendations are intended to support future conferences for the broadest community possible.

Looking into the future of regional conferences for MK educators and caregivers some challenges emerge. First, *containing the expense* of travel, registration, and accommodations at any regional conference must continue as a priority in conference planning. To maximize the potential benefits of these conferences, as many people as possible must attend. High attendance is result of careful needs assessment, high quality presenters, and inexpensive venues.

The conferences need to address all encompassing topics so that a broad spectrum of MK educators and caregivers are interested in attending. The conferences should position themselves as the inspirational and professional development conference for boarding home personnel as well as teachers and administrators. The conferences should not become platforms for narrow agendas, and should be open to input from outside.

If the conferences are to be a meeting place of ideas, organizers and participants need to be willing to open up the conference to schools differing in mission statements and target communities. The conference should be open and attractive to everyone involved in ministry to MK and expatriate Christian communities, regardless of the percentage of MKs in the student body, or whether the school is primarily American, international, or of another cultural heritage. The conferences will build up each of the ministries and ministers (including educators) as they join in exploring issues from biblical perspectives.

The ICMK conferences in Manila, Quito, and Nairobi revealed the importance of ministry to MKs and sensitized us to the need to make our services as effective as possible. The regional conferences have

continued to prioritize the need to work out the best ministry in each unique context, drawing from the wisdom and experience of colleagues in ministry.

Some of the issues needing attention will remain the same, and will need to be repeated due to staff turnover. But other challenges will be new. The regional conferences will continue to be an important means to address these challenges, learn together, and find joy in the knowledge that we are not alone in our ministry to MKs.

1. Edlin, Richard “Educators Re-affirm Link Between MK Education and MK Nurture.” *ACSI World Report*, Spring, 1993, p. 9.

2. Greenhalgh, David. “The ICMK Resolutions: A Proposed Course of Action.” *ACSI World Report*, Spring, 1993, pp. 6-8.

## **Part VII:**

# **Looking Toward the Future**

## 54.

## *Trends in Missions: Implications for Future MKs*

**Paul E. Nelson**

Windows of opportunity, new thrusts, pilot projects, and dozens of other short-lived strategies for world evangelization come and go in the missions community every year or two. Some of these emerge from visionary missiology, some from geopolitical upheavals, some from economic pressures, and some, unfortunately, from limited insight. Relatively few are viable long enough to become generally recognized trends. However, there are three realities in today's worldwide missions community that most observers agree are genuine trends.

These three are especially significant for families because they will have an impact the way tomorrow's missionary kids grow up, define their cultural identity, and receive their education. They are (1) the globalization of the missions community, (2) the increasingly diverse contexts in which traditional and nontraditional missionaries work, and (3) the length of time missionaries are on the field.

### *Globalization of the Missions Community*

The fact that there are classifications like new sending countries and old sending countries or Western missionaries and non-Western missionaries provides some insight into the globalization of the missionary force. While there may be differences in the way people calculate the actual number of cross-cultural missionaries in each of these classifications, there is no dispute over the fact that the missions community is as diverse and multinational as the church itself. The implications of this trend toward a more multicultural missions community for future generations of MKs are both exciting and problematic.

The universal message inherent in a multinational missions team is that the gospel of Christ's redemption is far more than a religion of the country or region from which the missionary comes. MKs who are part of this multicultural missionary community may grow up with a world view that includes a profound understanding of the diverse world Christ

came to redeem. Neither the message nor the gifts for ministry belong to outsiders—they are not the possession of Westerners who choose to share them with others less fortunate. MK schools can be enriched by the history, literature, and traditions of their multicultural student body. MKs can find commonality in Christ rather than in the culture of their parents.

While this opportunity has been assumed to be part of MKs' experience, reality often falls short of this ideal. *De facto* strategies have been based on the assumption that fulfilling the Great Commission was less complicated when missionaries were clustered into culturally homogeneous enclaves and teams. In this configuration, they could develop a cooperative strategy to reach a specific language group or geographic region with a minimum of cultural dissonance within the team. One frequently expressed motivation for this inferred strategy comes from the desire to have MKs retain the cultural and national identity of their parents.

Western missionaries, particularly North Americans, have responded to this concern by establishing loose networks of schools around the world that reflect the content, style, and values of the educational system in their country of citizenship. Non-American missionaries are usually invited to send their children to these schools but, to the chagrin of some parents, their children lose much of their language and cultural identity in the process. As the globalization of the missions community continues, there will be increased pressure and impetus to adopt a more inclusive schooling model. Replicating the American pattern by establishing separate schools for each expatriate group will never be practical. The costs are too high and the results unsatisfactory. The context in which the informal American MK school system was built is not the context of tomorrow.

In the new multinational missions community, the options for education and models for families in cross-cultural ministry will be based on a much higher level of parent involvement. As options for education increase, there will need to be an emphasis on helping parents from all sending countries identify and evaluate the relative value and appropriateness of each option available to their children. The questions that should be asked by missionary parents from all nationalities will need to be standardized. The answers will need to come from the missions

community at large, not just North American educators. Those involved in MK care and education will need to represent a multinational resource base, and they will need to work together to create additional options that will serve a multinational student population.

Parents can be helped to develop the tools that will enable them to take a more proactive role in becoming part of the answer as well as in part of the decision making. If this is the kind of response the missions community makes to the challenges inherent in a globalized missions community, then the exciting possibilities for the global church and for tomorrow's MKs will be multiplied. If the response is to continue clustering missionaries into cultural enclaves, then these and many other opportunities to demonstrate unity in Christ will be lost.

### ***Diverse Contexts***

The second trend that will have an impact on tomorrow's MKs is the increasingly isolated and diverse contexts in which traditional and non-traditional missionaries work. Terms like creative access, host-church, bivocational, foreign student, and mentor/consultant, are replacing terms like missionary visas, pioneer missionary, church planter, missionary doctor, and mission compound. Many of tomorrow's cross-cultural Christians will be as distant from the term "missionary" as today's teams working in Northern Africa are distant from the term "crusade."

The impact of these changes on tomorrow's MKs will be experienced as an incremental loss of the close-knit missionary subculture. Aunties and uncles who were the printers, nurses, pilots, teachers, mechanics, secretaries, facilities managers, dorm parents, and almost everything else needed to sustain an often idyllic self-contained community will be gone. Complex political, religious, and demographic changes will cause many of the missionary enclaves to be embarrassingly visible and unacceptably vulnerable.

The only way agencies and missionaries will be able to continue working in some countries will be to become integrated into the local community and participate in the local economy. Developing as well as developed countries will become increasingly selective in who they identify as potentially helpful to their citizens, government, and economy. Other countries will join the growing number of "creative access"

regions of the world and extend visas to expatriates based on their perceived value to their country, not on what foreigners propose to do.

These new "missionaries" will have to find appropriate ways to balance their vision for sharing Christ with fulfilling their legal and ethical obligations to the host country. Some will seek for this balance through consultation with colleagues and will be guided by their mission agency or sending church's strategy. The complexity of local situations may force other nontraditional missionaries develop their identity and strategy without much outside counsel. Small three- or four-family mission agencies created to target creative-access countries will also be part of this mix. Most of them will have little experience with the complexity of ministry in these settings but their presence will affect the way every Christian is perceived.

Regardless of how these individuals or groups choose to function in these stressful settings, they will develop their ministry and identity without the network of support systems and supportive relationships many of today's missionaries enjoy. Their ministry and role in the community will emerge through the institutions to which they are attached or the local jobs they hold, but the new MKs in these families will struggle to find a place in which they to thrive.

Children of diplomats, executives of multinational companies, relief and development workers, university professors, entrepreneurial business men and other nonimmigrant expatriates, all have culturally acceptable roles in their community. Children of nontraditional missionaries whose families no longer identify themselves as "missionaries" face a significant dilemma, "How do I maintain my integrity as I tell my friends why we are here?" To their supporting constituencies back home, they are missionaries, but in the community where they live, they are not permitted to acknowledge their true purpose.

Beyond this question of identity is the question of peer support. Children whose parents are in the military, diplomatic corps, international business, and other expatriate roles have a virtual global community of peers to which they also belong. Shared values and experiences tend to give these global nomads a sense of belonging wherever they go. For generations, MKs have benefited from and have been supported by their world-wide sense of belonging and connectedness with other MKs. For

many, this identity has provided a critical source of security that affirmed their cultural and world-view differences as an advantage rather than a deficiency.

The unique nature of tomorrow's missions community will create some dilemmas for nontraditional missionary families. Unlike their expatriate colleagues in business or government, the source of funds for these missionaries is not directly related to the work they do. Members of the community may not be aware of this anomaly, but the children in the family most certainly are. Along with the support funds comes a complex set of relationships with several constituencies including sending churches and sponsoring agencies.

Communicating with these constituencies is vital to continuing financial support, but guarding what is said and how people reply can get complicated. Add to this complexity the underlying spiritual dimension to everything the family says or does. The very motivation for being in that community tends to separate them from other expatriates with whom they would normally bond. In a significant way, these differences will keep tomorrow's MKs from finding an identity with other MKs as well as with their age and cultural peers in the global community.

The disconnectedness of tomorrow's missions community will add to the complexities MKs will face. Without the reassurance of traditional links with peers who share their understanding of the joys and stresses of growing up in the missions community, tomorrow's MKs will face some unprecedented challenges. The close-knit communities that existed in MK schools, with mission colleagues, and in missionary enclaves will not be available to fill the void. Mental health professionals and other caregivers caution that the resulting sense of loneliness and isolation may have far-reaching effects on tomorrow's creative-access MKs.

### ***Length of Time Overseas***

The third trend in worldwide missions that will have an impact on tomorrow's MKs is a reduction in the length of time families remain in field-based missionary work. Tomorrow's missionaries will have an entirely different frame of reference for the term "career missionary." Limited term missionaries who lack the requisite lifetime commitment, or people who can't make it in cross-cultural ministry, may still be called

"dropouts" by veteran missionaries, missiologists, and researchers. At best, they might simply be considered second- or third-career professionals who enter missions later in life. In any case, the trend will continue. Demographers and sociologists support the probability that "career" will mean two to six years for many of tomorrow's missionaries.

The significance of this reality for tomorrow's MKs creates several interesting scenarios. For some it will be viewed as a wonderful opportunity to have their world view expanded and enriched through the experience of living in another culture. Depending on their developmental stage, they may find their years as foreigners wonderfully fulfilling and formative. It may be the defining event that shapes their values, faith, and priorities. However, they will not see themselves as culturally different from their peers in their country of citizenship. They will not experience the same dissonance upon returning to their country of citizenship other MKs experience, and their cultural identity will not change. The "third-culture kid" profile will not describe them.

Others may see this time of cross-cultural ministry as critically disruptive to their relationships, education, and opportunities, with few compensating benefits. They will not become part of the missions subculture that will provide them with the deep, sibling-like relationships that many MKs cherish. The sense of security and identity that comes from being part of the virtual MK community will not be there to help them cope with the disorientation and rootlessness they may feel as they re-enter their home country. They will not fit well in either the mission subculture or in the culture in which they lived for a brief time. They will find it difficult to fit back in their home culture because they have been disconnected during a critical developmental period. The stresses and ambivalence inherent in cross-cultural living can sow the seeds of resentment and bitterness that will dampen vision and strain family relationships well into adult life.

Just as their nontraditional MK counterparts may find it difficult to find an identity in their ambiguous world, so children of limited term missionaries may find it difficult to cope with the unarticulated, open-endedness that is common in their world. It is difficult for adults to leave the missions community when the inferred message is that leaving before retirement represents some level of failure. While this frame of reference

may change in future years, as long as mission administrators and supporting churches hold this opinion, there will be relatively few “acceptable” reasons for leaving the field.

One of those culturally acceptable reasons will continue to be the needs of the children. Regardless of the of real reasons a family may have for leaving their mission prematurely, identifying the children as the problem seems to be relatively safe. Asserting that they were not adjusting well or their educational needs were not being met raises few judgmental inquiries from mission administrators or financial supporters.

Offering an explanation that focuses on the children may help parents return to their church and community with a certain level of respect. They may be affirmed for being willing to make that kind of sacrifice for the sake of their children. However, the consequences for the child can be profound. When someone in a position of authority tells a child that he or she is so dysfunctional that their whole family had to come home, that child believes it. Add to that the inferred burden of disappointing God who called them to that ministry, and most children conclude that there must be something seriously wrong with them.

When popularly reported research presents this widely practiced deception as the primary reason for preventable missionary attrition, at least two harmful results are perpetuated. First, it reinforces the practice within local churches and the missions community, increasing the likelihood that it will be embraced or copied by missionaries from new sending countries as a socially acceptable way to return home. Second, using a child as the scapegoat makes it almost impossible to talk about the real issues involved in a family’s decision to leave the field.

The future may see churches, mission agencies, and host colleagues using the language of “specified term missionaries” and “task specific assignments” rather than “drop-outs.” If they can move toward accommodating reality, they can remove the lifelong stigma associated with attrition and the dysfunctional need to formulate a socially acceptable reason for doing something intended from the beginning.

### ***Paradigm Changes Needed***

As one looks for ways to maximize the advantages and minimize the difficulties for MKs and families fulfilling the Great Commission in the next decade, there are two paradigm changes that may need to be explored. The first is not a major change in practice as much as a recognition that *every parent in the increasingly globalized missions community has a stake in finding answers to complex questions concerning their children.* It might be helpful provide them with an opportunity and tools to formulate the right questions concerning their children as well as sources to which they may go for answers.

Sometime during the pre-field process parents need to be given a forum in which they can ask, “Who do I want my child to be culturally, spiritually, academically, vocationally and in other ways when he or she is eighteen years old?” Finding adequate answers to these questions will provide a basis for making dozens of other decisions concerning their children. Decisions such as where to serve, how to handle education, the appropriateness of boarding school, the timing and use of furloughs, and when to leave the field can be much more intentional when the desired outcomes are defined.

Both traditional and nontraditional missionary parents need to be encouraged to be proactive in issues that concern their children. They should be helped to seek the advice of colleagues, field leaders, teachers, grandparents, and others about what they ought to do if they want their children to be “normal.” They should be challenged to make fewer decisions by default.

One family may determine that there are specific values from their home culture they wish to retain and see reflected in their children as adults. The parents should be guided in specific actions they can take to identify and affirm these values before they leave home. They should also develop strategies to retain them while they are on the field. The things they take with them, the places they choose to live, the way they carry out their ministry, and how they spend their discretionary time will all reflect their decision to retain values from home.

Another couple may place a high value on making their ministry incarnational and see their family becoming part of the local culture as an integral part of their strategy for ministry. They may need encour-

agement to have their child become fluent in the local language and closely identify with the local culture. If their working theology of culture is tolerant of local differences, choices concerning where they will live and which educational options they will choose for their children are relatively straightforward.

Most missionary families will fall somewhere between these two extremes. They will be torn between fulfilling their missiological ideal and wanting their children to have educational experiences and a cultural identity as much like their own as possible. Making proactive choices concerning the desired long-range outcomes for their children will help families manage that tension more constructively. Rather than allowing immediate circumstances to dictate their options, they can be encouraged to evaluate the probable outcomes for their family and make decisions that are better informed.

The ultimate choice and result for the child may be exactly as it would have been had the parents not done any long-range planning. But when the probable outcomes are weighed and decisions made with more complete information, there will be much less anxiety about whether their child will be “normal.” A second paradigm change might be a little more fundamental than encouraging all parents to do some long-range planning. It involves *looking differently at who are presumed to be members of a missionary family*.

Family in the missions community is usually a Western style nuclear unit: father, mother, and children. In most non-Western cultures in which this nuclear group is living, family means extended family: grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on. For generations, members of these family-based cultures have viewed the foreign missionary’s nuclear family as unusual, and in some cases irresponsible and negligent. Members of most host cultures have accepted this unnatural family model as strange, but few have adopted it as their own.

### ***Extended Families as Ministering Units***

In the future, the missions community may well need to include extended families as the ministering units, along with nuclear families. In the North American missions community, it is becoming increasingly common to see middle-aged, second career professionals and early

retirees serving alongside young families who view missions as their first of several careers. Because neither of these generations sees the likelihood of a thirty-year investment in cross-cultural ministry, the climate may be right to introduce a new paradigm.

One can easily envision a Christian family in which two or three generations share a common vision for cross-cultural ministry. They may have assumed that one member of this godly family will be a missionary, and the others will support them financially and in other ways. In a family like this, it is also easy to foresee a time when the parents might become actively involved in short-term missions at the same time their children are preparing for their cross-cultural ministry with a traditional mission agency.

Rather than have the parents or grandparents move in one direction and the children and grandchildren in another, perhaps the mission agency and home church could work together to encourage them to fulfill their vision for ministry as an extended family. Pre-field preparation could include elements to help them understand the strengths and potential pitfalls of multiple generations serving together. They could be challenged to create a powerful model of cultural sensitivity for Christians in other cultures. The potential for building a whole new level of appreciation and respect for one another is exciting.

Few Western families have any experience with this type of inter-generational living and working relationship. Special training and preparation for each member of the extended family will need to be developed. This could be done with the active involvement of Christians from cultures who understand the underlying assumptions and values of cultures in which the interdependence of extended families provides the underpinnings for their society. Exploring this new paradigm, with all its inherent risks, could create an entirely new level of trust and understanding with colleagues from cultures where extended family responsibilities and structures are the norm. They would become the teachers, mentors, and resource people in an area where their expertise and experience are obvious.

For a variety of reasons, Christians from new sending countries are following the nuclear rather than the extended family model when they become cross-cultural missionaries. The extreme loneliness and isolation

many of them experience may be the result of being cut off from the counsel, support, and interdependence provided by their extended families. Some of the difficulties tomorrow's Western as well as non-Western MKs will face might be reduced with more family members accessible and involved with them in their life and ministry. Their cultural identity and language will almost certainly be more firmly established with three generations interacting on a daily basis.

Grandparents can have a level of credibility and trust in many communities that thirty-year-olds will never receive. The family's identity in their adopted country will be much more like that of immigrants than of rootless transients.

The potentially negative impact of all three of the trends described previously could be minimized if this approach to families in ministry were successfully implemented. If a significant number of tomorrow's missionaries were in extended families, issues of cultural identity, creative access, and limited longevity might all be less significant. New realities call for new approaches and this extended family model may be a way to accommodate those new realities. In the complex world in which tomorrow's MKs will live, there will be new challenges and new opportunities. The trends we observe in the worldwide missions community may be part of God's strategy for building his church or they may be evidences of the church's indifference. Either way, the church must recognize that there will be a cost to taking the gospel to people who have never heard it. As long as spiritually sensitive Christians, missions-minded sending churches, and visionary mission leaders participate in sending workers into The Harvest, there will be personal risks and rewards. MK caregivers who promote the notion that risks for missionary families are unacceptable must re-examine their understanding of discipleship. Christ's love is demonstrated through the way Christians care for and love one another. MKs, both today's and tomorrow's, will continue to present the church around the world with opportunities to demonstrate that love.

## 55.

### *Trends in Member Care*

**David C. Pollock**

I recall a conversation in the office of Dr. John Gratian, then the candidate secretary for Africa Inland Mission. It was 1975, and John shared his vision for the future of missions and the need for intentional pastoral care of missionaries. At that point, the vision was not widely shared, and the specifics of how to do it were not clear. He was asking a young mission-minded pastor to go to Kenya to develop pastoral care for missionaries, but in the mid-1970s neither Dr. Gratian nor the pastor were certain what the product would look like.

From Dr. Gratian's vision came the opportunity to observe, respond, and begin to picture a model of care from the call of the missionary to the end of missionary service and beyond. The work in Kenya initiated what is now known as the "flow of care." The flow of care includes appropriate discipleship, preparation, protection, intervention, support and care covering pre-experience preparation, transition, on-site adjustment and support, preparation for re-entry, re-entry adjustment, and support following the overseas experience. (See Chapter 4 for a more detailed description.)

During the next decade, apart from the Kenya experiment, there was increasing awareness of the need for intentional care and support of missionaries. That awakening created the response to the first International Conference on Missionary Kids, held in Manila, Philippines, in 1984. When Paul Nelson and I began to plan for ICMK Manila, with the support of MKOS (Missionary Kids Overseas Schools) in Asia, we anticipated one hundred participants at most. We were amazed when well over three hundred people "came running," as one MK missionary put it. The awakening to member care, including care for missionary kids, was underway.

What we thought would be a single conference was followed by another ICMK in Quito, Ecuador, in 1987 and a third in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 1989. In subsequent years, regional gatherings designed to focus on specific groups and needs followed. In 1992 European mission leaders convened EuroComet (European Conference on Children of

Missionaries Education and Training). Other regional and topical conferences were developed to train, inform, and coordinate the efforts of MK educators and caregivers throughout the world. (See Chapter 53 for details of the development of MKOA, MKEA, and MCOS.) The December 1996 conference, sponsored by MCOS (Missionary and Christian Overseas Schools in Asia), marked a new era with a significant percentage of participants from the “new” sending countries as well as non-North American “old” sending countries.

In 1993, Dr. William Taylor, director of the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission, initiated a study of missionary attrition called “ReMAP.” More than 450 agencies from fourteen countries (eight “new” and six “old” sending countries) were questioned regarding attrition statistics and reasons for attrition according to their records. The study was presented to a task force of nearly one hundred twenty representatives from thirty different countries, which met in 1996 in Ware, England. The recommendations and plans of that task force were published in the book, *Too Valuable to Lose*, edited by Bill Taylor (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1997). The research, task force, book, and resulting activity have put in motion a global wave which is altering the future of world missions by shaping the ways we care for one another.

These are not the only indicators of change, but they illustrate an awakening that is critical to missions. *Intentional care is not a fringe benefit.* It is an essential part of responsible obedience to God’s command to “go into all the world.” It involves both the “old” sending countries and the “new” sending countries, with their growing numbers of missionaries and complex challenges related to family, language, education, and cultural difference, even within the mission teams.

### ***Why Is It Needed Now?***

Why is such intentionality critical now, if people got along without it in the past? Recently I heard a third-generation adult missionary kid relating a conversation with her elderly grandmother about this very issue. The missionary grandmother said, “All this fuss! We didn’t need care from others; we took care of ourselves and each other.”

Many things have changed since the grandmother’s day! Fifty years ago, missionaries usually came from independent stock in rural communities. People from such backgrounds knew how to be supportive to each other. They worked together, intervened when one was injured or ill, and basically survived together. These people’s independence and interdependence were carried to the overseas setting.

### ***Changing Expectations***

Expectations have changed radically. Early missionaries expected to face great hardship and even death. Some missionaries were advised to pack their gear in a casket for shipment, because it would be needed sooner or later. Without any likelihood of care being provided physically, psychologically, or educationally, expectations were very modest. Today, care and support are considered to be a right by more and more people. Brokenness and change in the family, society, and cultural structure have removed foundations of healthy development and altered traditional support structures. The capacity for mutual care through extended families and stable neighborhoods can no longer be assumed.

Another reflection of changing expectations is the change of titles of executives who are responsible for workers, whether secular or church-related. When John Gratian spoke with me in 1975, his position was “candidate secretary,” reflecting that his job was primarily recruitment of new missionaries. A decade later, his title would become “personnel director,” with a broader scope of responsibilities, including personnel policy administration. In the 1990s, the position would be “director for human resources,” reflecting a widespread recognition that people are more effective workers if their needs for training, growth, and personal investment are taken seriously. The popularity of the American cartoon *Dilbert*, which portrays the opposite attitudes, demonstrates how important this is in our culture.

### ***Changing Roles of Missionaries***

Early missionaries were often pioneers. As principals, administrators, evangelists, and church leaders, missionaries made most of the

decisions. It was not possible to communicate quickly with the home office, and there was no established Christian leadership to consult on the field. While life was very difficult physically, the missionary was clearly in charge and usually held in high esteem. Today, missionaries serve in partnership with national peers and often under the authority of national leaders. Decisions are made according to local cultural patterns, and the missionaries sometimes feel they have little input in decisions which affect their lives. Roles of missionaries are far more complex and ambiguous than in the past, adding a great deal of stress to missionary life and increasing the need for support and wise counsel.

### ***Non-Traditional Missionary Roles***

Another change is the increasing number of missionaries in non-traditional roles. Missionaries who work as “tentmakers” in limited-access countries do not have the support of a missionary community or national church, and they may also lack a clear sense of role. Many newer sending organizations are too small to have well-developed support programs.

### ***Changing Roles of Women***

Women’s roles and expectations have changed radically in the West in recent decades. A century ago, becoming a missionary was the most exciting opportunity available for a Christian woman. Today, women have many options for careers and may assume that they will have significant professional roles as missionaries. Then, once overseas, married women in particular are frequently faced with role limitations because of cultural factors, few opportunities in their location, or board policies which ignore their needs and aspirations. They may find themselves doing home teaching or other tasks for which they have neither aptitude nor training.

Even if a missionary woman has a well-defined role appropriate to her gifts and training, in many places there are severe cultural restrictions on such things as dress and public activities. Thus, many women need assistance in sorting out the issues and discerning what God’s will is for them. Without appropriate support, the frustration missionary wives feel

inevitably affects their family life. As the saying goes, “When Mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.”

### ***Safety and Security Issues***

There is increasing stress in missionary life in the area of safety and security. In some locations wealthy people, whether nationals or foreigners, must protect their property with high fences and security guards. Many urban areas have large populations of unemployed young men with few opportunities to support themselves. Missionaries, by virtue of owning the tools of their trade such as computers and vehicles, are considered wealthy and can be targets for break-ins or even armed robbery. They wrestle with how to demonstrate God’s love for the poor.

Another safety issue is increasing civil strife and political unrest. “Wars and rumors of wars” seem to be the daily experience of more and more of the world’s peoples. Missionaries struggle with decisions about how much risk to take and when to leave or face evacuation. Provisions for evacuation are a very mixed blessing, as missionaries must leave behind nationals who are close friends and valued coworkers, and post-trauma care may be critical for missionaries’ continued service.

A related risk of missionary service (and other expatriate careers) is kidnapping. Motives usually have little to do with the individual or assignment, so kidnapping is difficult to prevent. Kidnapping is usually an attempt to get ransom money, or an indirect result of local political tensions. It is rarely given much publicity, because that would play into the wrong hands. Kidnapping is not common, but when it happens, well-trained consultants are urgently and immediately needed. The few professionals who have such specialized skills need to be widely available. Trauma care is also needed for the victim, the family, and the local mission community, even if the victims are eventually released.

### ***The Biblical Mandate and Model of Care***

The most important issue, however, is not need. The biblical mandate for care is not a 20th or 21st-century phenomenon. Jesus commanded us to care for each other in John 13:34-35, and included our care of children (Matthew 16). New Testament writers echoed those instruc-

tions in II Peter, I John, Ephesians, and Philippians. Barnabas modeled encouragement and care in his relationship to the body of believers in general (Acts 4:36) and his mentoring of Saul (later Paul) and John Mark (Acts 15:36 ff). The product of Barnabas' care is seen not only in John Mark's evident usefulness (II Tim. 4:11) but also in Paul's mellowness and encouragement of a frightened young believer (II Tim. 1:7).

The model of mutual care in Christian community permeates the New Testament. The writers of II Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, Philemon, and I Corinthians reflect the fact that it was unusual for someone to be left alone. Paul's complaint and plea to Timothy (II Tim. 4:9 ff) was related to being left and needing support.

The *primary* reason for intentional care of missionaries at the beginning of the 21st century is that we have a mandate and a model from Christ. We cannot ignore Jesus' words if we claim to be his followers. The *secondary* reason for well-planned intentional care is increased need because of cultural changes and the fracturing of support structures. Both individualistic and collective societies are in the midst of massive change, with little to protect the individual and family from disaster.

### ***What's Ahead in Member Care?***

The increase in both need and demand for care is simply a fact of life. Mission leaders are confronted with the need for member care in order to increase missionary effectiveness and decrease attrition. The vision for care, based on biblical mandates and models, provides energy and motivation for action. The resulting increase in caregiving activity in the missions context, while usually less well organized, is encouraging. The pieces are coming together for new and effective responses to sometimes overwhelming needs.

The World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission is taking the initiative to encourage and facilitate the development of coordinated, cooperative plans for delivering care to missionaries and their families around the world. Dr. Kelly O'Donnell has been instrumental in spreading the vision for appropriate care of missionaries in Latin America, North Africa, the Middle East, Europe, East Asia, and Central Asia.

Dr. Kenneth Gamble of the Missionary Health Institute of Canada, along with his colleagues, has been seeking ways to cooperatively deliver consistent care to missionary personnel. Mission leaders in New Zealand and Australia are seeking to bring care providers into official relationships with mission "umbrella" agencies to make their services more accessible to individual mission agencies.

Dr. David Lee Tai Woong leads a team of colleagues in Korea in pursuing care of people under the agency of Global Missions as well as influencing other mission organizations in Korea and beyond. Polly Chan in Hong Kong is leading the way for greater care of missionary families, and especially MKs, of Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Brazilian and Nigerian mission leadership are giving voice to their needs and their commitment to meeting the needs. The people and agencies mentioned here are examples of a trend toward cooperation and coordination, not just caring for their own missionaries.

According to Kelly O'Donnell, "We must move beyond the individual, family, and agency approaches to care, and develop a more systematic, global, cooperative approach to providing member care. We must develop a macro-model for member care."

Models are being developed, even as this chapter is written. I believe the vision that Dr. O'Donnell has articulated is the beginning of design for a "highway system," to enable individual care providers and smaller agencies to build their "ten miles of good road" as part of a comprehensive system. Dr. O'Donnell's article, "Agenda for Member Care" in the book *Missionary Care* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1900) indicates directions for the future which are summarized here:

- We must prioritize and channel member care resources toward those working among the least evangelized.
- We must be intentional in the development of member care through mutual consultation, coordinated efforts, perseverance, and interdependence.
- We must mirror the expansion of the worldwide missions force with appropriate, comprehensive member care programs and services.

- We must develop cooperation among the “pockets” of member care workers around the world, and mobilize and train many others for this strategic ministry.

Agencies such as Missionary Aviation Fellowship have provided transportation and communication for the missions community. We need to develop agencies that are similarly interconnected, providing comprehensive member care for the missions family all over the world.

“By this shall all people know that you are my disciples.”

## 56.

### *Facing the Future: Issues in MK Education*

**Philip M. Renicks**

As we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century, the church, mission-sending agencies, missionary parents, and MK schools face the challenge of meeting the educational needs of missionary kids (MKs). Beginning in Manila in November 1984 with the first International Conference on Missionary Kids, research has been conducted, conferences convened, articles written, and pre-field orientation programs established for MK teachers and boarding parents.

A wealth of resource materials is now available for making informed decisions about MK education; you are holding one of them in your hands. This book, which was produced through collaborative effort, represents a serious effort to improve the quality of education and care in order to help families fulfill their mandate to “go and make disciples of all nations, ...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” More tools for parents and educators have been produced during the past decade than over the previous 130 years.

Despite this recent progress, a closer examination of the issues and the dynamics at work in the education of missionary children is still needed. Dr. David Brooks states that “the most important goal of MK education should be to help missionary families in the field of children’s education so that they may better reach people for Christ.”

The basic educational needs of missionary families as we enter the twenty-first century are very similar to those of families who led the way in our modern era of missions. However, major changes have taken place in the number of educational options available, and in how those options are delivered. Earlier in this century, mission agencies had rigid policies governing the educational choices for missionary families. Now, the agencies have become more flexible, placing greater responsibility on missionary parents for the education of their children.

The past five to seven years have seen new mission frontiers opening in China, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the

limited-access countries of the “10-40 window,” all of them calling a new generation of pioneers to reach the lost for Christ. The question asked by most missionary candidates is still, “What about my child’s education?”

MK and international Christian schools around the world provide missionary parents with good options for their children’s education, whether they choose boarding or day school. Many such schools, because of changing needs and demands, are asking, “Who are we here to serve? Should we serve only MKs, or should we serve the broader expatriate community? Should we serve only MKs who can attend a day school program, or have we matured enough to serve as an educational center for families choosing a nontraditional approach to education?” These questions demand that the school reexamine its mission statement and perhaps even redefine its core values.

Dr. George Durance, formerly the director of Black Forest Academy, a mission boarding school in Kandern, Germany, believes that the primary goal of MK education is “...fostering a passionate love for truth in the hearts and minds of our young people.” The Dalat School in Penang, Malaysia, recently redefined its mission as “to prepare young people to live fully for God in a rapidly changing world by enabling them to understand, evaluate, and reconcile that world with the foundation of God’s unchanging values.” While these goals are not unique to MK education, they are contextualized within the framework of an educational program that calls students who are growing up in a culturally diverse world to discipleship in a Christ-centered learning community.

### ***Four Critical Issues***

What are the most critical issues facing MK caregivers, parents, and educators as they consider the challenges of preparing young people for the next century? Where shall we focus our attention? How shall we respond?

***Changing Demographics.*** Missionary families from the two-thirds world are answering the call of God for service abroad in unprecedented numbers, resulting in an increasingly multicultural student body in MK schools. Since most schools were established on a North American model, they are often inadequately prepared to meet the educational needs of a multinational student body. In some schools half

the students come from non-English-speaking homes. Thus missionary educators face the challenge of meeting the educational, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of students they don’t fully understand.

***Parental Expectations.*** Missionary parents in general have higher expectations for the education of their children. They reason that since they are making the sacrifice of living away from the educational services available in their home country, the mission owes them the best it can possibly provide for their children. They want the quality of education that MK schools offer. They want their children to be well prepared to re-enter the culture and educational system of their passport country. However reasonable these expectations seem, missionary parents often leave the field because of unfulfilled expectations for the education of their children.

***School Personnel.*** MK schools are facing the increasing difficulty of finding and keeping qualified faculty and staff who can adjust to and meet the needs of an increasingly multicultural student body. More and more candidates are opting for short-term service, a development that takes its toll on the continuity of the entire school program. The recruiting base has traditionally been limited to North America, where the church has failed to recognize the value of the MK educator in the context of missions. Thus, the task of recruitment is becoming increasingly complex and difficult.

***Educational Options.*** A growing number of missionary families are accepting the call of God to parts of the world that lack any access to an expatriate Christian day school. If there is space available in a regional boarding school, some parents may choose this option for high school students. Even fewer parents will choose national schools and find them adequate to meet their children’s needs. Thus there is a growing demand for programs that will provide missionary families with the educational support they need to carry out their ministry.

It is impossible to examine all the issues and challenges that impact the future of education for missionary families, MK schools, and the agencies that serve them. The above list is limited, and yet I believe it represents four of the most critical needs related to MK education as we move into the twenty-first century. The list grows out of my experience as an MK school educator and my role as Vice President of International

Ministries with the Association of Christian Schools International in working with Christian schools in eighty-eight countries over the past twenty-three years.

Each issue identified above requires serious thought and research. These issues are not new, but they will go with us into the third millennium. I believe we can look forward with anticipation to greater unity in the body of Christ as we come together to address each of these and other related issues.

### ***Where Do We Go From Here?***

As we deal with the challenges of changing demographics, parental expectations, school personnel, and educational options, where do we go from here?

***Changing Demographics.*** In the past ten years the missions movement in the two-thirds world has grown five times faster than in the West. As the church matures around the world, even greater numbers of missionaries will come from Asia, Latin America, and Africa. These changes present exciting challenges. Along with the changing demographics, there is an increased demand from outside the missions community for the quality of biblically-based education offered by the MK and international Christian school. Thus the demographic changes force the school to reexamine its mission, again asking, “Who are we here to serve?”

The number of Korean students in MK and International Christian schools is growing rapidly. School and mission leadership must be proactive in determining how they can best serve this new segment of the missions community. Phil Billing, Director of Murree Christian School in Pakistan, traveled to Korea to gain firsthand knowledge of the Korean educational system and Christian family life. He met with Korean mission leaders to discuss educational and care needs of Korean missionary families. Phil spent time in fellowship with Korean families to learn about their culture and spiritual aspirations, and he investigated the possibility of recruiting Korean staff for Murree Christian school.

The Korean church is exploring another model: to establish its own educational system for Korean children. This is currently being tested in

Manila with the opening of the Hankuk Christian School. However, Phil Billing reminds us that “the full potential for mission will be realized only if East and West can meet in a cooperative, collaborative, and integrated approach to the task. MK schools and mission communities will benefit if Korean MKs can be integrated into educational systems that are flexible enough to provide for the diverse needs of a multicultural student body.”

Regardless of the national origin of missionary families or the educational setting they choose, expatriate Christian schools of the next century must be determined to know the students and parents they serve, including their culture and educational expectations. They must examine their curriculum for its sensitivity to the multinational student body, and they must work closely with missions leaders and parents to address issues of education and MK and family care.

***Parental Expectations.*** The baby-boomer missionary generation has strongly influenced the way we look at education for the missionary family. Families are more likely to choose a nontraditional approach to education even when a viable traditional option is available. Mission agencies and others involved in the education of MKs must take a more active role in preparing parents for the options available to them. Parents must be informed and counseled to set realistic expectations for their children’s education. Mission candidate school or pre-field orientation must provide parents with an opportunity to look objectively at the options. Knowledgeable people must inform parents about the advantages and limitations of each option as well as the implications for their children’s entry to higher education.

Today’s missionary family has much more control over their children’s education than families of previous decades. This trend will continue. I’m confident that if we address carefully the educational concerns of missionary parents, we will also address one of the major reasons for the attrition of missionaries. A research study by Jonathan Lewis, *Investigating the Causes and Cures of Attrition*, rated “children” second only to retirement as a reason for leaving missionary service. Missionary parents must be encouraged to form partnerships with the MK and international Christian school to help identify, locate, and provide access to the resources that will meet their children’s needs more

adequately within the limited scope of the school curriculum. Parents cannot expect the school to do it all.

**School Personnel.** Until a few years ago, the word “recruitment” was unheard in mission personnel offices. However, with the increasing number of MK and international Christian schools and paid positions available for teachers in both the missions community and the international community, the recruitment of school personnel has become a necessity. ACSI recruiting fairs at Christian school teacher conventions and on Christian college campuses in North America have played an important role in linking mission agencies and international Christian schools with potential candidates.

As we move into the next century the need for effective recruiting will be even more acute as government agencies predict a shortage of teachers worldwide. The international Christian school must examine carefully its mandate, mission, vision, and educational goals. When recruiting teachers, the school must be able to articulate its mission and vision clearly while discovering as much as possible about the candidate. A good match is critical. Attrition among MK caregivers will be minimized as we do a better job of recruiting. School directors and administrators must take a more active role in recruiting and not rely completely on home office recruiters. With the increasing multinational complexity of the student body in MK and international Christian schools, the base for recruiting must broaden to include countries represented by students in the school. This practice would assist the school staff in meeting the challenges of the multinational student body.

Schools and sending agencies must take seriously the orientation and induction of staff. To ignore that need is to stay in perpetual organizational infancy. School administrations must stop squandering their human resources by ignoring the orientation and induction needs of staff. ACSI and Interaction Inc. offer a two-week intensive pre-field orientation for MK caregivers. Statistics show that caregivers with pre-field orientation stay on the field longer than those without it. In addition to pre-field orientation, the international Christian school must establish an on-site induction program for at least the first year of new teachers and caregivers. There must be a greater effort to build a long-term mindset and help new staff members take a sense of ownership in the mission and

vision of the school. Children attending the overseas school need stability and continuity in their educational program. They need teachers and boarding parents who are committed, godly role models willing to make a long-term investment in their education and nurture.

The topic of educational options could consume many pages. I will list the options I believe demand closer attention as we move into the new century.

**Boarding Schools.** In 1995 Jim Reapsome, editor of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, raised the question, “Are boarding schools on their way out?” A close examination of boarding schools around the world would permit us to answer a resounding “No!” In fact, there seems to be a greater demand for boarding schools today than a decade ago. A new boarding school has just opened in Nairobi, Kenya; consideration is being given to opening a boarding facility in conjunction with the International Christian School of Budapest in Hungary; Black Forest Academy has just opened additional boarding facilities; and there are waiting lists at the International Christian Academy in Côte d’Ivoire, Faith Academy in the Philippines, and Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. Boarding schools will most certainly be listed among the viable options available to missionary parents in the twenty-first century.

Boarding schools today are doing a better job as a result of research, the training of caregivers through pre-field orientation, examination and accreditation of boarding programs by ACSI, and the cross-pollination of boarding personnel through international and regional conferences. While boarding may not meet the needs of every missionary family, it will continue to be an option, particularly for high school students. The boarding school must constantly evaluate the needs of the families it serves.

**Nontraditional Educational Options.** These have always been available to the missionary family. The Calvert system pioneered the way for many missionary parents who home-schooled their children. With the advance of technology, we are seeing an explosion of options. The advent of the World Wide Web has opened a whole new range of educational menus that can be downloaded virtually anywhere in the world, if missionary parents have a cellular phone or a satellite link. The

virtual school will be a reality of the twenty-first century. The challenge is how to verify the quality of instruction and assure accountability.

Missionary families who have answered God's call to the remote regions of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, China, and the limited-access countries of the "10-40 window" require support services different from anything provided in the past through correspondence and home schooling. Parents want their children to have the best education possible. They want educators and educational institutions to be accountable and to be closer to them than the correspondence provider in their home country. The challenge is changing the mindset of the missions culture, the home churches, and the MK school community to be less judgmental about the educational options missionary families choose.

SHARE, an agency established to provide services, helps, and resources in education for missionary parents serving in remote areas from Eastern Europe to Central Asia, has proven an invaluable resource. This model has far-reaching implications for the support of missionary families well into the future. Under the leadership and vision of Dr. David Brooks, Executive Director, SHARE has provided an innovative approach to educational options apart from the established MK or international Christian school.

SHARE provides help to families that have chosen national schools or some form of home schooling. The staff designed pre-field conferences to assist missionary parents in establishing realistic expectations, assessing educational options, and making educational plans. SHARE also works with existing MK and international Christian schools to provide regional centers for the broader missionary community in the area. In addition, the organization offers educational conferences dealing with the evaluation of students' educational progress, educational planning, learning styles, supplemental curriculum, and second-language issues.

The services provided by SHARE are unique. While they are currently limited to Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Central Asia, such services will continue to be in demand worldwide as missionaries move their families into limited-access countries of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

In conclusion, we must face the challenges of the future with our eyes wide open. We must constantly be aware of the shifting paradigms of a rapidly changing world, and seek to be relevant in our application of a biblical model of curriculum as we serve the educational needs of MKs. We must forge new networks of cooperation and establish linkages among new mission-sending countries committed to living out the Great Commission. We must heed the research of the past as we project the needs of the future. We must recognize that *the greatest danger we face may be assuming that the answer to the future lies in holding on to the past.*

# Appendix

## About the Contributors

**Marilyn Pool Andreasson** resides in England and is working on her Ph.D. in the area of Second Language Learning. She taught French in Michigan and served in Côte d'Ivoire with CBIInternational.

**Tom and Wendy Ballentyne** serve as team parents in an MK boarding home at Faith Academy in Manila, Philippines. Wendy is the author of "Sour Grapes or Raisins?" published by Faith Academy.

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**Joyce M. Bowers** is Assistant for Mission History for the Division for Global Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She and her husband served as educational missionaries in Liberia.

**Polly Chan** is coordinator for Asian MKs in OMF. She served with OMF as a teacher at Chefoo School in Japan and taught high school in Hong Kong.

**Richard J. Edlin** is the director for MK education for SIM International. He served as the administrator of the Carachipampa Christian School in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

**Evan and Jewel Evans** are dorm administrators for the International Christian Academy in Côte d'Ivoire. Evan grew up as an MK in Vietnam and Malaysia. Evan and Jewel serve as staff at the Pre-Field Orientation sponsored by ACSI and Interaction.

**Ollie E. Gibbs** is Headmaster of the Lexington Christian Academy in Lexington, Kentucky. He formerly served as Vice President for Academic Affairs of ACSI and travelled extensively.

**Brian V. Hill** is Professor of Education at Murdoch University in Western Australia, and editor of the *Journal of Christian Education*, published by the Australian Teachers' Christian Fellowship.

**Wayne D. Lance** is Managing Editor of *Parents Teaching Overseas*, a newsletter published by Wycliffe Bible Translators. He is a retired university professor and public school administrator.

**Jean M. Larson** and her husband are the founders of Bridges, which provides transition assistance to missionary families. They served at a boarding school in Ft. Dauphin, Madagascar, for twenty years.

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**Michael G. Loftis** is the Executive Director for Central and Eastern Europe with ABWE, and lives with his family live in Budapest, Hungary. He grew up as an MK in Jamaica.

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**Bonnie McGill** serves at Morrison Academy in Taiwan under OMS. The article in this book is based on her research for a master's degree at Azusa Pacific College.

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**Diane Morris** is Member Care Associate for MKs for OC International. She served as a teacher and elementary counselor at Faith Academy in Manila, The Philippines.

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**Paul E. Nelson** is President of Mission Training International in Colorado Springs, CO. He was a co-chairman of the ICMKs and served as Superintendent of Education for Wycliffe Bible Translators.

**Sally Jane Norton** is Director for Development at Faith Academy in Manila, The Philippines. She and her husband served in a church planting ministry with SEND International for eighteen years.

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**David C. Pollock** is Executive Director of Interaction, Inc. He was a co-chairman of the ICMKs. He is a speaker, consultant and author who specializes in the needs and care of Third- Culture Kids.

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