

To Recruit or Not to Recruit Adult Missionary Kids: Is that (Really) the Question?

by Rosalea Cameron

The social care and educational development of Missionary Kids (MKs) is a high priority in evangelical missions. When family units are deployed abroad, the needs of minor dependent children are considered. Indeed, mission agencies devote considerable attention and resources to provide for identified needs.

Our understanding of how to meet these needs has grown through the research of teams of interested consultants whose findings have been published as chapters and sections in books on member care.¹ The present article is a call for mission agencies to extend their existing focus on MKs beyond member care to mobilization. It is a call for ongoing care for MKs as minor dependents to be coupled with nurture of these individuals as potential adult missionaries.

A growing body of research is giving us greater insight into the adult tendencies of individuals who spend childhood years abroad. One significant finding reveals that, as adults, these individuals actively seek engagement in forums that provide interaction with people of multiple cultures. (Cottrell, 2002) Not only are these adults competent and confident in the global arena, they are most comfortable when surrounded by people from a variety of ethnicities.

From the perspective of evangelical mission agencies, this tendency for MKs to seek ongoing involvement within multi-cultural contexts in their adult lives means one of two things, either: 1) adult MKs are engaging in the international arena in significant ways, such as through employment abroad or through service and social connection with internationals within their own countries and the evangelical mission body is missing out on this potential for intentional recruitment; or 2) MKs are following the call of the Great Commission in their adult lives and becoming missionaries and mission agencies are missing out on the opportunity to intervene during their childhood years to thoroughly nurture and disciple them in ways that will develop

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missionaries of highest competence. In either instance the evangelical mission world has work to do.

Adult MK tendencies

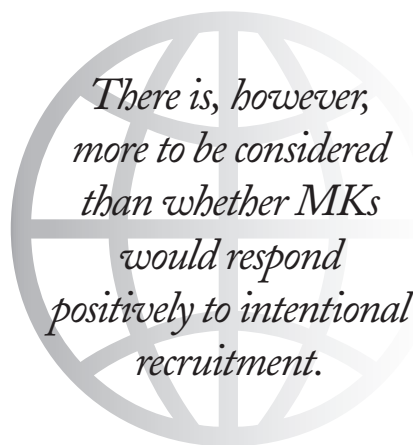
Let's proceed from the assumption that heightened awareness on the part of mission agencies is all that is needed to escalate the efforts of mobilization personnel to recruit adult MKs into missionary service. MKs grow up with the immediate reality that spreading the Gospel is a central priority of the Christian church. They learn of the complexity of evangelizing people who live in remote and restricted corners of the globe. The work of evangelical Christian missions is the very world of the missionary child. It would seem easy for an MK to then be called back to this familiar world as an adult.

There is, however, more to be considered than whether MKs would respond positively to intentional recruitment. We need to honestly address some questions. Does willingness to go equate to a call to serve? Does ease in adapting to the missionary lifestyle equate to competence? Does cross-cultural empathy equate to a capacity to empower national church workers?

MKs experience some unique life patterns and the adult outcomes reflect the potentially positive and potentially challenging results of these life patterns. Table 1 details adult tendencies that can be linked to these childhood experiences.

Whereas the body of available research specifically examining the outcomes of an MK childhood is currently quite limited, sufficient documentation does exist to generate vibrant dialogue. One research effort (Cameron, 2003) invited adult MKs to identify character traits they now had as a result of childhood years abroad and to comment on factors within the childhood developmental ecology² that could be linked to those adult traits. Respondents' contributions were triangulated with research

findings related to broader studies on individuals who spent childhood years abroad for reasons other than the cause of missions (Cottrell, 1999, 2002; Useem & Cottrell, 1993, January, May, November, 1994, March) and anecdotal commentary found in published literature (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). The findings of this research have been tabulated under four categories identified as most impacted during the MK experience: identity, relationships, mobility, and spirituality (Cameron, 2006). They have been separated in Table 1 as hav-



ing potentially positive outcomes and potentially challenging outcomes.

If mission agencies are to intentionally recruit adult MKs into missionary service, then it is helpful to examine the extremes of potential adult tendencies. Note, however, that these extremes are listed only as tendencies. Indeed, many variables have to be considered in relation to the MK experience, including: disposition, age of entry into the mission context, amount of time spent as an MK, health of family dynamics, sibling separation, degree of social restriction experienced, amount of contact with other expatriates, frequency of visits back to the passport country, access to internet and electronic mail, and many more such variables. Less time in a host country will affect the degree of attachment to more than one culture; it will also impact linguistic capacity. Extended periods of familial separation will affect the

capacity for intimacy and trust within relationships; lesser familial separation will result in greater capacity for intimacy and trust for the adult MK. Adult tendencies can, however, be self-managed, a significant factor in determining missionary competence of adult MKs.

Identity

The extremes of the MK life include issues of identity. The MK engages in cultural behavior relevant to at least two different global locations and has to negotiate the path of establishing a personal sense of identity amidst these extremes. One Australian adult MK reported (during an interview) on the challenge of her identity search.

I didn't feel very different, it was sometimes I just sort of thought, oh, that's so typically French even though, I think when I was over there I felt Australian and now that I'm back here I feel very French but I've always had such a holiday idea of Australia that I thought I totally related with but when I've actually come here to live I realize that my thought processes and the way I look at things and the differences in culture that, I'm very much more French than I am Australian. (Cameron, 2003, p. 242)

In reality she is neither French nor Australian, but she does have a capacity to see the world through various ethnic lenses; she has developed a heightened value of multi-culturalism and a tolerance and acceptance of difference. These adult traits contribute to missionary competence. However, the issue of identity can lead to challenges if there is a constant need to prove one's worth. This can be a handicap to missionary competence. An adult MK in his mid-30s reported on his sense of self-worth.

I always have to prove that I am acceptable to others. I feel this is a result of changing schools and having to break into the 'in' crowd all the time. Now I am a workaholic and am never satisfied that I can let my guard down and just be me. (Cameron, 2003, p. 270)

Table 1. Defining elements of the MK ecology and the associated potentially positive and potentially negative outcomes

<i>Defining elements of the MK ecology</i>	<i>Potentially positive outcomes</i>	<i>Potentially challenging outcomes</i>
Identity		
Negotiation of at least two countries and their respective societal demands — host country and — passport country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Cross-cultural skills o Observational skills o Linguistic skills o Resourcefulness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Need to control own personal world o Underdeveloped skills to be competent in passport country upon repatriation
Anticipated repatriation to a parental home country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Value of multiculturalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Intolerant of even innocent mono-cultural perspectives on life
The status of being an expatriate in a host country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Broad world view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Confused social status
Relationships		
Nurturing from alternative caregivers — domestic workers — boarding house parents — other missionaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Tolerance and acceptance of difference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Diminished familial bonds o Confusion over acceptable moral, cultural, and spiritual boundaries
Engagement in a sponsor agency network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Security of system structures o Security of established social and support network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Purposefulness of life results in tendency to make employment choices based upon service rather than academic and skill capacity—can result in long-term satisfaction or long-term challenge o Forced outward compliance to system norms; underdeveloped capacity for critical analysis and gradual development of personal choice
Engagement in an expatriate community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Inclusive relational capacity; reduced tendency to stereotype o Worldwide network of friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Diminished sense of belonging anywhere o High turnover of friendships
Mobility		
Patterns of heightened mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Love of and confidence in travel o Adaptable o Self-confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Addiction to the “new” o Tendency towards ongoing mobility at the expense of social and career capital
Early and repeated relational loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Independence o Live to enjoy the present o Friendship initiation skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Overly self-sufficient o Unresolved grief o Relational self-protection; boundaries to relational intimacy and vulnerability
Spirituality		
The God-factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Early and deep awareness of the spiritual dimension of self o Opportunity for early role modeling and discipleship by adults deeply committed to the Great Commission o Early exposure to global issues and opportunity to comprehend and develop a godly response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Can feel in competition to God for developmental needs o Vices of passport culture taught as abstract taboos rather than experiencing gradual exposure leading to personalized commitment to honor God

This table is excerpted from *Missionary Kids (MKs): Who they are; Why they are who they are; What now?* (© 2006 Cypress Trust, Brisbane, Australia.) Used by permission of the publisher.

Relational Skills

Relational skills are central to missionary competence. In many cases missionaries work within expatriate teams and even when this is not the case, missionaries always have to respond with social competence to host country nationals. Adult MKs typically bring with them heightened communication skills across age, class, and cultural barriers. They typically have heightened linguistic capacity because they are exposed to more than one language as a child. MKs often have a wide network of friends from many different countries. The patterns of mobility throughout childhood years can help them to develop skills that facilitate friendship making.

Outcomes that impact relationships emerged as significant in the Cameron study. In decreasing order of frequency in self-report, the findings from this research project are listed representing adult traits these MKs identified in themselves as resulting from their

childhood experiences (2003, p. 219). Those traits marked with an asterisk, nine out of twelve, directly impact relational competence.

In some instances broad relational competence is enhanced.

I can relate to anyone. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

I am able to 'read' people and situations very quickly and accurately. I'm sure that was a survival skill I developed when I was a child. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

(I have) an appreciation for people of different cultural backgrounds. This has been an advantage in my work as a minister. All the churches I have pastored have had people from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural and sub-cultural backgrounds. My early years have given me a broad mind and the ability to accept people as they are. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

One adult MK who spent childhood years in an Arab country identified some of the strengths and weaknesses of his relational competence.

I had no contact with local girls. I played with the occasional (expatriate) girl who came across our path as if she were a boy. This attitude, which some may call naïveté, led to some healthy platonic friendships over the next ten years or so. However, it did not prepare me for the sex crazed girls I experienced on my return... or for the intricacies of gender-related expectations and miscommunications in the West. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

In some instances adult MKs are very clear about the relational challenges they face as a result of their childhood years.

I find it hard to trust people and hard to open up, and let people in to know the real me, beyond the superficial level. I have many 'social' friends, but very few real friends. I still have to fight the tendency to withdraw from social contact. I know that my withdrawing sometimes hurts people but there are times when I can't do anything else... There are times when I am too self-sufficient. It's hard to

let other people involve themselves in my life; it implies a trust and an emotional risk. This means that sometimes I can be 'bossy'. It comes from a need to be in control of what happens to me... I don't want others making decisions for me. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

An adult MK who serves as a pastor over people of multiple ethnic groups enjoys his role but acknowledges that he has some relational traits that impact his leadership function.

We learned to rely on our own resources at an early age... I guess this has both positive and negative consequences. I find I like to do things myself... There are times when in a leadership role, the self-reliance I have learned is not necessarily an advantage; I have found delegation difficult sometimes. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

Mobility

Cycles of mobility during childhood significantly impact the adult tendencies of individuals. These lead to a heightened capacity to adapt and to make the most of any given situation. Childhood mobility also leads to adult restlessness. Age and disposition seem to be variables that affect the intensity of these adult outcomes.

(I am) still restless. There's a rootlessness that I feel sometimes and an awareness now that that is just part of who I am and it's probably always going to be there. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

I find it very hard to commit to anything long-term in spite of being a reliable person. I want to move on to different surroundings after five years. I get bored quite quickly and like to change things around, even if it's the furniture. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

I have experienced a restlessness, and a desire to move on to new places and experiences. This is finally beginning to subside. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

Cycles of mobility often involve painful partings from people who are impor-

Table 2 Self-reported Adult MK Traits and Relational Competence

*tolerance and acceptance of difference	(43.4%)
*cultural empathy	(39%)
love of and confidence in travel	(34%)
*value of multi-culturalism above mono-culturalism	(34%)
*adaptability	(34%)
*broad world view —intolerance of narrow mindedness	(26%)
deep sense of spirituality	(26%)
*independence	(21%)
*self-sufficiency	(21%)
*impaired social/relational development and high expectations, demanding, fear of loss	(21%)
restless —unsettled	(21%)
*relational self-protection	(21%)

tant to the MK. The MK lives in one place for a time and then moves on to another location. This can simply be between the passport country and the host country. It can also include multiple moves between schools attended. In every instance, the social make-up of a given context changes while the MK is absent so that even if he or she returns to a location, the march of time has impacted the construction of social groups and the place one has within such groups. MKs learn to adapt and be resilient as highlighted by two adult MKs who spent childhood years in boarding school type situations.

(I have) an ability to cope with just about anything, even if I don't like it. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

I mostly accepted the way life was. For me it was pretty much live and let live. I didn't have much control, but that didn't bother me. I have a fairly compliant personality. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

However, adult MKs may carry unresolved grief and learned behavior that inhibits their capacity to process grief and relational conflict in a healthy and constructive manner. Another two adult MKs who spent childhood years in boarding school type situations identified related adult tendencies.

Leaving home at age 8 means you miss out on lots of family growing up together stuff. Having to keep hurts and pain to myself meant that I always edited what I told my parents and that became second nature. I've always had to work through things on my own. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

My parents said they saw me change from being an outgoing and loving child to one who froze them out and was unresponsive and at times hostile...I did actually love my parents deeply but had learned over the years that being sad at parting didn't change anything...it just emotionally devastated you so you learned to block those feelings off. It was a coping mechanism. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

Unresolved grief and unhealthy patterns of dealing with relational

I have been faced with the meaning of life and discrimination... This has brought me closer to God.

conflict are damaging in any social context. When these behavior patterns are manifested within mission teams the work is crippled.

MKs begin to process spiritual concepts from a very young age. They are aware that God is the reason for their life abroad and so there is opportunity for early reflection.

(It) probably caused me to question things more than maybe I would have...having those two cultures...with Christianity and atheism and just some of the strong characters I met...I can see how those kinds of questioning and trying to work things out with your mind and taking a stance...sometimes I just sort of thought, you know, what's the point of all this thinking but (it) made me take a stance more as an individual because I had to think things through even harder. (Cameron, 2003, p. 244)

I have been faced with the meaning of life and discrimination... This has brought me closer to God. It has also influenced the way I think about life. For example, that no-one who denies the existence of a personal and absolute God has the philosophical right to complain about suffering, or to claim that one's own way is right if anyone else sees something differently but I am perceived as a little stuck-up. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

The challenge for the adult MK can be in protecting against a plurality of values or beliefs. In some instances MKs have been carefully sheltered within insular Christian environments and have not been exposed to alternative spiritual beliefs during childhood. They may not have developed the capacity for discernment so integral to missionary competence. The result can be an adherence to moral and spiritual practices without defensible ownership or it can be willingness to compromise.

We lacked the exposure to the variety of work available; people with different outlooks in life—believing other religions and so on. I lacked the ability to discern the good from the bad when I finally returned. (Cameron, 2003, p. 261)

God is at the heart of the MK life and even those who choose not to pursue a personal relationship with Him in adult life are spiritually impacted by the experience.

I was always aware that my parents were engaged in very important work that would have consequences for all eternity. I absorbed their sense of self-sacrifice and duty and believed at the time that it was my duty not to do anything that would make their work more difficult. But it led to me often resenting God for the sacrifices which it seemed to me, as a ten year old, that He demanded...although I no longer participate in any religious organizations, I retain my judgements of right and wrong, just and unjust. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

For many MKs the sacrifices demanded have led, instead, to deeper commitment to God and the Christian faith; a comprehensive understanding of the character of God.

Pain has led to a deeper spiritual life. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

I had a 'different' set of experiences and difficulties...I haven't worked out a wonderful use for these experiences yet. But I am grateful to God for the blessings He has given me. Continually reminding myself that God cares and loves each one of us, including me personally, is very important to a sense of worth and belonging...I wonder what is God's perspective on hardship? I suspect he does not see it as something to be avoided in the same way as we do. (Cameron, 2003, raw data)

To recruit or not to recruit is not really the question. When and how to recruit are the questions posed in this article. The Great Commission is a call to all of Christ's followers. If MKs have a head-start on managing a globally mobile life then it makes sense to invest in them as children and give them opportunities to explore the call of God into adult missionary service as well as to develop a comprehensive capacity to live out that life at the highest level of competence.

Intervention

Global mobility is becoming a fact of life to the current generation. Advances in technology and communication as well as the increasing ease of international travel have made the remotest corners of the globe accessible to those with the resources to travel. Not everyone does travel but the MK is less of an oddity these days as he or she joins the throng of children who spend childhood years abroad for purposes such as defence, diplomatic relations, private business, humanitarian and development aid, and education. MKs join the throng of Global Souls for whom the author Pico Iyer is a representative and a voice.

Children of blurred boundaries and global mobility... I exult in the fact that I can see everything with a flexible eye; the very notion of home is foreign to me, as the state of foreignness is the closest thing I know to home... A lack of affiliation may mean a lack of accountability, and forming a sense of commitment can be harder without a sense of community. Displacement can encourage the wrong kinds of distance... The Global Soul may see so many sides of the question that he never settles on a firm conviction; he may grow so used to giving back a different self according to his environment that he loses sight of who he is when nobody's around. (Iyer, 2000, p. 24-25)

While we delight in the colourful nature of such individuals and are excited by such multi-dimensional selves, the question for us here remains as to how to nurture qualities

of highest missionary competence. How do we harness this colourfulness and vibrancy for the sake of the Great Commission while also nurturing commitment to God and others, Christ honouring accountability, a firm conviction of personal identity, comprehensive relational capacities, and a willingness to grieve and to resolve conflict?

Intervention starts with awareness that there is an issue to be addressed. In this case the issue is the untapped reservoir of potential missionary recruits who appear to have height-



ened capacities for missionary service as well as challenging adult tendencies that may handicap missionary competence. Mission agencies can appeal to adult MKs to pray about the potential call of God on their lives to serve abroad. However, this needs to be done with the insight that adult MKs may have a residual desire for mobility and for ongoing international engagement and may mistake this for the call of God to missionary service. The call needs to be honestly tested. Awareness allows that once a call to overseas ministry is confirmed, mobilization personnel can begin to transparently address the adult tendencies that may impact effective missionary function. Adult tendencies that are transparently discussed are more likely to be surrendered to God either for His maximum use or for His healing.

Adult tendencies are much harder to adjust than the behavior patterns of children. Therefore, interven-

tion will be much more effective and have enduring results if it is applied to MKs while they are yet children. Intervention should begin while an MK is an MK. If we truly believe that the MK developmental experience will result in at least some adult traits that enhance missionary competence then it behooves mission agencies to direct resources and attention to hone such qualities within these potential recruits. Existing research suggests that there are adult MK tendencies that are very useful to missionary service. By applying resources and attention to deliberately nurturing these traits, mission agencies could encourage MKs to hone these tendencies and surrender them to the service of God. In the areas where tendencies exist that potentially handicap missionary competence, mission agencies could provide deliberate intervention for the purpose of developing life-skills to manage these dimensions of life. Self-management coupled with surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit is a path to holistic development. Socially and emotionally healthy individuals will be more constructive missionaries. Those qualities that heighten the adult MK's missionary competence will then have opportunity to shine rather than being blurred behind tendencies that lead to inhibited missionary performance.

Let's explore some real-life examples. Obviously many examples could be found to represent challenging behavior that is manifested by missionaries who were not MKs, however, in these instances these behaviors were manifested by adult MKs and represent identified adult tendencies.

Adult MK Missionary 'Tim' was fluent in the local language, happily socialized amongst the national church workers, willingly travelled to any location suggested by the mission leadership, and reported active involvement in the national church initiatives. However, everyone knew that when held accountable for goals and projects assigned by the mission leadership,

Tim would walk out of team meetings. This established behavior pattern left older missionaries frustrated and younger missionaries confused. Tim would not be held accountable.

Adult MK Missionary 'Andrew' was an extraordinary fund-raiser due to the stories of national involvement and life change that resulted from Andrew's missionary endeavours. Language was not a problem for Andrew nor was interacting in un hospitable situations. Andrew would vow allegiance to the missionary team when meeting and setting goals for the future; he happily aligned with the national workers if they appeared to be disempowered; he sometimes responded to communications and sometimes did not. Andrew came and went at will. Over time the missionary team grew weary with trying to determine Andrew's allegiances; they moved forward with the collective vision and allowed Andrew to become a solitary mover, setting an individual agenda that might or might not align with the group vision.

Adult MK Missionary 'Sarah' was warm and hospitable to any person of any walk of life. Sarah loved the social network of the mission team. Functioning within the system had been Sarah's life; the system represented comfortable, manageable boundaries. As new missionaries came and old ones went, Sarah created a social calendar to facilitate interaction. People coming and going was part of the system. Sarah had stories about everyone and happily shared them. Over time, no one felt safe to be transparent with Sarah lest they find their way into one of the frequently rehearsed stories. Sarah's storytelling never included a description of restoration after being wronged, only an explanation of how the other person had moved on. Conflict was never resolved, only rehearsed. For the rest of the missionary team, taking part in the social calendar became a duty. Communication remained at a superficial level. Peace was never

We have the greatest opportunity of mobilizing an army of missionaries in the next generation . . .

made; no one was able to restore open relationships.

Were these missionary behaviors addressed? Yes, most certainly. Despite prayer and loving confrontation, these behaviors persisted and served to demoralize the three separate teams within which they were manifested. Unfortunately, adult intervention was inadequate in addressing behaviors that handicapped missionary competence. Even with awareness, some tendencies are so well established and defended that they are a challenge to change or to self-manage. This validates the case for intervention while MKs are yet MKs.

If mission agencies are to recruit MKs into adult missionary service they need to begin with the current generation of MKs; these who are yet children need to be the focus of mobilization personnel. If we invest in the lives of these ones who are still in the process of understanding the character of God and of choosing an autonomous identity, we have the greatest opportunity of mobilizing an army of missionaries in the next generation who are well equipped for the ongoing mandate of the Great Commission.

What should intervention look like? Once again, intervention begins with awareness, the awareness of what needs to be nurtured and disciplined, and awareness of what needs to be managed through the acquisition of life-skills. Intervention begins by cross-referencing missionary competence with the adult tendencies of MKs. What dimensions of the adult MK profile will enhance missionary function and what dimensions need to be managed better so that there are less adult tendencies that will handicap missionary teams?

Those who have opportunity to engage in the intervention process

include: missionary parents, influential extended family members, other missionary personnel in the same location as a given MK, member care and mobilization personnel from within mission agencies as they interact with MKs, and pastors to the missionaries. Intervention must be intentional, planned and consistent. Haphazard and occasional efforts to invest in the lives of MKs will not produce the necessary nurture, discipleship, and guidance needed to support MKs in this developmental process. Significant adults must choose to walk beside MKs and unconditionally love them so that their adult tendencies are healthy and relationally whole.

Child development is a precarious journey even for those in the most stable environments. It is so much more precarious for those called upon to isolate an autonomous identity when there is a multiplicity of cultural values placed before him or her, when there is separation from biological family and involvement with significant others from various walks of life, when there is early and repeated relational loss, and when there is a huge God to comprehend in a complex world.

For those willing to commit there are some things that can be immediately initiated. They all require time and consistent engagement.

Choose to have a relationship

Chosen relationships are powerful agents of influence. Family members are powerful in the developmental process but non-familial, deliberately chosen relationships also play a significant role. These relationships can be significant in building self-definition and self-worth. (Barone, Iscoe, Trickett & Schmid, 1998; Franco and Levitt, 1998) The power

of these relationships rests in consistent engagement. It is only over time that MKs will learn about gradual shifts in power and increasing levels of trust that are key factors to the maturing process. In a chosen relationship an adult must initiate contact, engage in play, maintain regular communication, pray for and with the MK, celebrate milestones, share tears over pain, be constructively transparent. Above all, the adult must model God's character.

Nurture self-awareness within the MK

Studies have shown that an individual's personality is approximately 45% influenced by biological make-up and 55% influenced by environmental factors in the childhood environment. (Plomin & McClearn, 1993; Steen, 1996) The MK needs to be made aware of both biological make-up and the unique factors in his or her environment that impact development. Influential adults can provide feedback and guidance to the MK in understanding his or her disposition. These adults can also research the significant factors of the MK environment and help the MK to understand and manage these factors. A child's biological disposition affects the way he or she responds to the unique demands of the environment. Heightened self-awareness will help the MK to respond constructively to the environment, making the most of positive elements and gradually developing life-skills to manage the challenging elements. As the MK becomes older, commercially prepared personality profiling resources can be used to heighten self-awareness and to establish healthy plans for responding to the environment.

Disciple the MK into a healthy personal relationship with God

Nothing is more important than the spiritual nurture of MKs. MKs need to gradually grow into a loving, surrendered relationship with God as personal Creator, Savior, and Friend. No adult can sponsor such development unless he or she has a resolved

and vibrant relationship with God. This intervention suggestion begins with self; an adult committed to this cause must first examine his or her own walk with God. Are you modeling Christ-like behavior? Are you entirely surrendered to the will of God? Do you have honest and strong answers to the tough questions about God's character and His call to serve? Those who have affirmative answers to the above questions are equipped to disciple MKs into healthy, personal, and dynamic relationships with the God of the Great Commission.



To recruit or not to recruit MKs for missionary service should not be the question. The question to explore is when and how we should recruit MKs for missionary service. Let's not wait for research to provide definitive results about this colourful band of people, let's begin to apply some of the initial understandings and together refine the process of recruiting MKs into missionary service. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹North American religious mission groups formed a cooperative effort to research the issues of missionary children with the establishment of the Missionary Kids-Consultation and Research Team/Committee on Research and Endowment (MK-CART/CORE). Conferences were held in Manila in 1984, in Quito in 1987, and in Nairobi in 1989. In 1986 a meeting was held between representatives of eight mission groups to define topics requiring research. CART was composed of mission representatives who posed

questions and identified issues and CORE was made up of six researchers responsible for designing and conducting research. The three primary areas identified for the focus of research and subsequent publications were (a) boarding school personnel and their effect on MK development, (b) the processes and outcomes of MK life, and (c) implications of missionary family life on the development of the MK. The desired outcome of the research has been to understand the dynamics of family life that result in families remaining in the mission work and experiencing healthy relationships inside and outside the family. The desired outcome specific to the MK as dependent minor is to nurture healthy, satisfied children who are spiritually integrated and go on to become mature Christian adults. (Andrews, 1995, 1999; Bowers, 1998; Powell, 1999; Powell & Andrews, 1993; Taylor & Pollock, 1995; Van Reken, 1995; Wickstrom, 1994; Wickstrom & Andrews, 1993)

²The term environment refers to external elements that surround a person, animal, or plant. Ecology on the other hand refers to the relationships between living things and the surrounding elements; the significance of interaction is included in the term ecology. This is an important distinction because the developing child, the MK, engages and interacts with the defining elements of the childhood experience. The external elements in the child's life are not static and the child is not passive toward those elements. There is a force between the child and the elements. It is in these dynamic processes that character is shaped.

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