

# Living in a Yellow Submarine: Third Culture Experience of Korean Missionary Kids at Faith Academy

*Alfonso B. Deza and Dong Hwan Kwon*

---

*Although the ministries of their parents are local-church related, Korean adolescent Missionary Kids (MKs) at Faith Academy are hardly involved with the local culture. Instead, strong western cultural influences are indicated in church attendance, nationality of friends, and media consumption. This acculturation of western elements appears to be a deliberate, if not anxious, experience regulated, on the one hand, by the need to learn western skills and concepts to enable them to succeed in school and eventually compete on the global stage, and, on the other, by the impending possibility of going back to a highly monolingual and monocultural Korean society.*

---

## Introduction

The term Third Culture Kid (TCK) was first coined by John & Ruth Hill Usem (1967) in their study of American expatriates living in isolated compounds in India. Several decades later, partly because of the changing nature of living of TCKs in host countries, that is, from expatriate communities to open communities, Pollock broadened the definition and identified further the changing context of TCKs.<sup>1</sup>

TCKs are primarily influenced by elements of the culture of their home country (i.e., their parents' culture) and the culture of the host country (i.e., the country to which their parents are assigned). Yet, in their development, TCKs, though able to relate to both cultures, invariably live in a third culture, a culture between cultures, which is not necessarily the product of their home and host cultures. This culture, which is represented in the shape of a submarine in the study's framework, brings to mind the idea of maintaining distinction while traversing and immersing in different cultural waters.

Pollock & Reken (1999) propose the following definition of a TCK:

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her development years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements of each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of the same background (19).

TCKs are raised in a genuinely cross-cultural and highly mobile world. They usually have a privileged lifestyle, being children of employees of transnational corporations, religious missions, the military, diplomatic corps, and the like. As a result, according to Pollock & Reken (1999), they may even be more “directly conscious than peers at home of representing something greater than themselves – be it their government, their company, or God” (23).

Unlike immigrants, TCKs are expected at some point to be repatriated along with their parents back to their home country, where they are expected to settle down and live permanently. But unlike their parents, who already have an established cultural identity with the homeland, TCKs are still behooved to contend with changing cultural values and practices to achieve cultural balance, since they have not yet “completed the critical development task of forming a sense of their own personal or cultural identity” (Pollock & Reken 1999: 39). The matter of how to fundamentally relate with the surrounding dominant culture remains, therefore, whether this is the host or the home culture.

### *Expatriate missionary children*

Missionary children or kids (MKs), who experience living in and adapting to different cultures, learning new languages, and adjusting to local customs and living arrangements, constitute one category of TCKs.<sup>2</sup> Korean MKs form an even more specific subgroup. Although western definitions and concepts regarding TCKs touch likewise on the characteristics of Korean MKs, there are several problems and struggles Koreans face that do not show up in TCK discussions.

These problems entail peculiar cultural identity struggles, where the matter of identity comes, not from the clash or integration of the home culture and host culture, but from the clash or integration of cultures between the third culture and the international school culture (or western education). This includes dealing with the consequences of learning to speak English fluently rather than Korean.

Pollock & Reken (1999) have used the term ‘fourth culture’ in reference to the influence on Asian students of western-oriented schools (221). But the matter was mentioned merely in passing, as their work focused on western TCKs. This paper elaborates on the former.

The main factor that distinguishes Korean MKs as Fourth Culture Kids (FCKs) is the international school culture. It is not hard to imagine, for instance, that while students coming from English-speaking countries, such as Canada, U.K., and Australia, may feel different (as TCKs) in an American-based educational system, the feeling experienced by non-English-speaking and non-western students (as FCKs) is even more complex. As a Korean missionary once confessed, he saw his children neither as Korean (by virtue of their passport country), Filipino

(by virtue of the host country), nor American (by virtue of the westernized school his children attended) (Han 1997).

Moreover, for Korean students in particular, who come from a highly monocultural and monolingual society, studying in an international school does not readily translate to successful education. For one, there are marked differences in educational values, deriving from different social and cultural milieus, between the westernized educational school system and the Korean school system. Also, several problems tend to crop up, such as difficult cultural adjustment on the part of both the international school and the student, poor preparation for Korean higher education, and learning disabilities due to lack of English language skills. These problems are due in part to the school's failure to understand and address the cultural, social, and linguistic context of FCKs.

When seen from the perspective of radical shift in Korean Diaspora, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century flight from persecution and poverty to the 21<sup>st</sup> century global enterprise, and considering in particular the increasing number of Korean missionaries bringing their families to mission fields, the need to reassess the educational requirements of Korean FCKs becomes imminent. Korea is currently the second largest missionary-sending country in terms of the population of international missionaries (Moon 2004).<sup>3</sup> The number has rapidly peaked in the past 15 years.<sup>4</sup> If this phenomenon continues, it will be a major factor in reshaping the demographic map of world mission.

### *Exploring the situation of Korean MKs in the Philippines*

Korean Christian missionary families have been engaged in religious projects<sup>5</sup> in the Philippines since the 1980s, and their numbers continue to grow. It is within the context of a growing Korean Christian community in the Philippines that this paper is written. It explores how the home, host, and western school cultures of adolescent Korean MKs (12 to 18 year-olds) at Faith Academy<sup>6</sup> influence their interpersonal communication patterns and media preferences. The paper hopes to contribute to the greater understanding of how communication and media orient the Korean MKs' sense of cultural identity. Its specific objectives are:

1. To find out the general profile of Korean MKs at Faith Academy; and
2. To identify and describe patterns of interpersonal and mediated communication between and among Korean MKs at Faith Academy.

## Previous TCK/MK Studies

### *Both/And-yet-Neither/Nor World*

This paper uses the work *The Third Culture Kid experience: Growing up among worlds* (Pollock & Reken 1999) as primer and initial source of working definitions and concepts regarding TCKs, the general category to which Korean MKs in Faith Academy belong. For many TCKs, having developed preferences and personal relationships in fast-changing cross-cultural environments, home is where the heart is. This home may exist neither in the home culture nor in the various host cultures, but perhaps in the culture of a Both/And-yet-Neither/Nor World, which is shared in common by all global nomads.

In further understanding the vital role the school plays as an institution of culture in the lives of Korean children, and the trust parents place on the school to help mold their children, an illuminating work is Borden's (2000) *Confucius meets Piaget: An educational perspective on ethnic Korean children and their parents*.

Borden, who is himself bicultural, looks below the iceberg of Korean culture to unravel the value system and perspectives necessary in understanding and addressing the needs and peculiarities of ethnic Koreans or, as he suggests, hyphenated Korean students (e.g., American-Korean). He stresses that these students have "different academic and social habits, characteristics, and attributes [which] deeply affect the development of their cultural identity" (6). Their integration into the school system is contingent on how well Korean values and perspectives are communicated to them, and on the general environment in school, from which they may learn or catch these values.

### *Drawing attention to the MK phenomenon*

American-based research on missionary kids began with studies regarding adjustment, and later delved into effects vis-à-vis identity formation and self-esteem. Among these studies are the following:<sup>7</sup> problems of adjustment of MKs returning to the United States (Fleming n.d.; Parker 1936); effects of expatriate schooling on the academic adjustment of American college students (Krajewski 1969); role of families in the identity formation of MKs (Hermann 1977); the self-esteem of MKs (Wickstrom 1978); comparison of various emotional and intellectual levels of MKs and ordinary preachers' children in the United States (Danielson 1981); effects of multicultural experience on the psychosocial adjustment of returning families (Schultz 1986); religiosity and missionary education in the mission field (Sharp 1987).

Such studies drew considerable attention from sociologists, anthropologists, and Christian educators, and made them aware of the growing number of American MKs in other cultures.

### *Korean MKs*

A former missionary to the Philippines, Choi (1998), studied how cross-cultural environment factors affected the identity formation of Korean students. She did a comparative study of students at Faith Academy and of children who attended churches in TaeGu province, Korea and found no significant statistical differences in the identity formation between the two groups. This finding contrasted with her initial perception that Korean students at Faith Academy had more difficulties in their cultural identity formation. Although she failed to find general differences in cultural identity formation between Korean students in TaeGu and Korean students at Faith Academy, Choi found that the school and its culture influenced the lifestyle of Korean students at Faith Academy.

Another study on identity formation is Back's (2002) research on Korean MKs who had come back to Korea for higher education. Conducting an in-depth interview with four returning Korean MKs, Back studied the differences in the identity formation of these MKs who had grown up in a multicultural environment and the identity formation of monocultural Koreans. The respondents had difficulty in clearly delineating home and host cultures, since the school culture they were exposed to in Taiwan replicated significant elements of their home culture. It was likewise found that the period of cross-cultural experience was a more crucial factor in identity formation than the frequency of experience.

Of direct consequence to this paper is Kim's (2001) study, data for which she gathered at Faith Academy. The cross-cultural experience of the students brought positive effects on their relationship with God, and developed in them a high regard for missionary work as a future vocation. While it was not her intention to look into cultural influences, her study nonetheless showed differences in cultural adjustment or adaptation between Korean adolescents who entered Faith Academy early and those who entered late, as reflected in their English language skills. Although most respondents had a high degree of satisfaction with their education at Faith, only a fourth knew written Korean, the rest preferring to go to the U.S. for higher studies. In effect, academic preparedness and motivation to pursue higher education in Korea were relatively low.

A host of other materials can be found in the Korea Congress Library that deals with Korean MKs, including the following: the cultural identity of Korean students in international schools (Back 2000; Kim 2001a; Kim 2001b; Lee 1996); the educational institutions, methods (including home schooling), and

suggestions of Korean MKs (Ban 2002; Choi 2000; Jae 2003; Kang 1995; Lee 2002; Lee 2003; Park 2003); MK counseling (Kim 2003); policy for MK education (Shin 2002); and bilingual education for MKs (Shin 2002). Most of these studies were done within the last five years, focusing mainly on matters of cultural identity and methodological approaches to Korean MK education.

### *The challenge presented by TCK/MK studies*

The abovementioned studies on Korean MKs notwithstanding, it seems that there remains a general dearth of materials regarding the third culture from an Asian perspective. It is especially during these times, with the steady increase of Asian global nomads roaming the world for economic, religious, or other purposes, that studies of this nature are timely.

Pollock & Reken's definition of and concepts regarding TCKs, while useful in understanding their nature and circumstances, could therefore stand further honing vis-à-vis the impact of westernization on TCKs who come from non-western worlds, such as Korea, resulting in what may well be called a fourth culture kid. Based on the cited studies on Korean MKs, the influence of western culture is apparent in terms of peer group relationships, use of language, relationship with teachers, and high regard for a school that prepares them well for education in the United States or in other western countries. The latter matter was, of course, not considered an issue at all by U.S.-based studies on missionary kids, since these missionary kids happened to be from the western world. But when seen from the perspective of Korean missionaries who bring their own kids to their mission work in other countries, this matter may become an issue, especially when the family goes back to the homeland.

## **Conceptual and Operational Framework<sup>8</sup>**

### *Third Culture Model*

The Third Culture Model, based on Pollock & Reken's explanation of TCKs, is shown in Figure 1. TCKs are described as those who live simultaneously in a *Both/And-yet-Neither/Nor* culture. It is the culture that interconnects with the home and host culture but is somewhat different from the two. The first culture, representing Korean culture, overlaps with the circle of the host culture, producing a third culture in the shape of an oval or, in the context of this paper, a submarine.

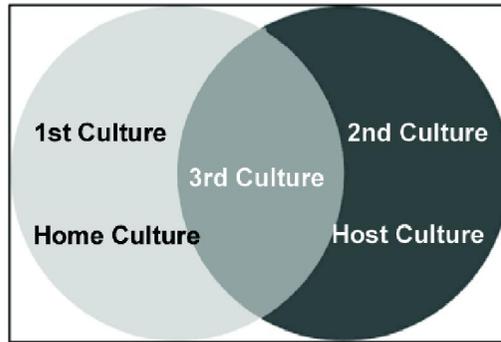


Figure 1. Third Culture Model

However, this model does not fully illustrate the situation of Korean TCKs. What it lacks is a third circle to represent the westernized MK school as another culture. Previous studies provide strong evidence that a westernized MK school does impinge in more ways than one on the culture of Korean MKs.

***Operational Fourth Culture Model***

With the addition of a westernized school culture, a new cultural model is created (see Figure 2). In this model, three different cultures overlap, creating between each culture a respective third culture and an area where all three cultures merge. This new area signifies the possible fourth culture, which is the extent of western cultural influences through the school. This paper elaborates on interpersonal and mediated communication patterns among Fourth Culture Kids (FCKs), specifically the Korean MKs in Faith Academy.

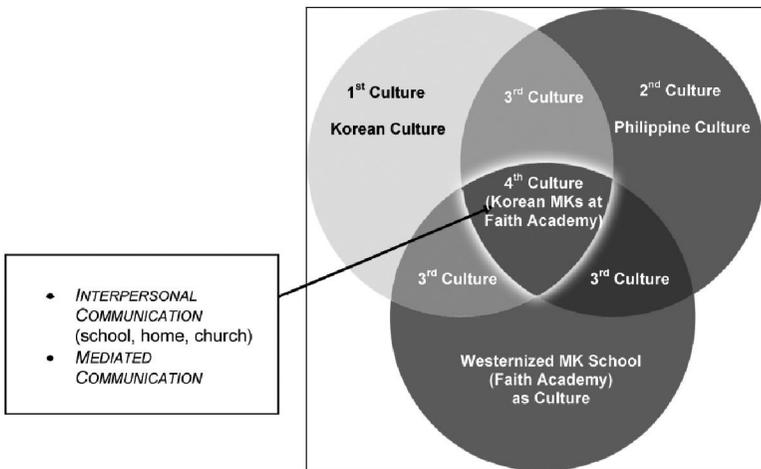


Figure 2. Operational Fourth Culture Model

## Research Methods

The case study from which this paper is derived was exploratory and descriptive in nature. It employed qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods, i.e., self-administered survey, interpersonal communication and media use diary, and in-depth peer group discussion. Data gathering was done on September 20-26, 2004.

Questionnaires were distributed to all Korean adolescent students<sup>9</sup> of Faith Academy who served as the population for this study. Close to 70% of these adolescents actually participated in the survey. Two sets of respondents for diary writing were purposefully selected from among those who answered the questionnaire, using the following categories: a) those who have studied for a relatively short period of time in an international MK school (including Faith Academy); and b) those who have studied for a relatively long period of time in an international MK school (including Faith Academy). Peer group discussion participants were purposefully selected based on the following criteria: a) high school student; and b) living together with other possible peer group participants in a place where they may share things in common (such as in a dormitory).

## Results and Discussion

### *Multicultural environment at Faith Academy*

Table 1 shows the nationalities of students studying at Faith Academy from school year 2000-2001 to school year 2004-2005. While the majority of the school population has consistently been Americans (roughly 60%) over the past five school years, the proportion of Korean students has steadily been increasing from 15% to 22%. For this latest school year, nearly a fourth of the total student population are Koreans (22.2%), followed way behind in third rank by Canadians (5.4%). Enrolment of Korean students is the only one that has increased over the five-year period. Meanwhile, the enrolment of Caucasian students – except for Norwegian and American students – has steady declined from 2000 to 2004.

### *Demographic characteristics of Korean MKs*

Of the 132 Korean students, 93 are adolescents from Grades 6-12. A total of 65 adolescents (68.9%) participated in the questionnaire survey. The survey is fairly balanced with regard to grade level representation (Table 2), and to the proportion of males and females (see Table 3). Most of the respondents have a Korean passport (96.9%), validating their nationality as Korean.

Table 1. Total number of students by citizenship at Faith Academy  
SYs 2000-2005

Citizen-ship	School Year				
	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Australian	17	10	11	11	10
Brazilian	1	1	0	0	0
Canadian	40	42	42	32	32
Dutch	1	1	0	0	0
Farde Islander	1	1	1	1	0
Filipino	7	5	6	8	15
German	7	6	5	2	5
Indian	6	6	5	5	1
Japanese	4	6	6	3	3
Korean	90 (15.4%)	95 (15.4%)	118 (19.6%)	119 (21.7%)	132 (22.2%)
Malaysian	4	4	5	5	4
Myanmar (Burmese)	4	3	3	2	1
New Zealander	12	8	10	7	5
Norwegian	1	3	2	6	6
Papua New Guinean	1	2	0	0	0
Singaporean	2	2	0	0	0
South African	4	2	1	1	0
Sri Lankan	3	2	1	1	1
Swedish	4	5	3	3	3
Taiwanese	3	5	4	4	4
British	8	13	10	6	7
American	364 (62.3%)	395 (64.0%)	368 (61.2%)	329 (60.2%)	359 (60.30%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	584	617	601	546	595

Source: Central Office of Faith Academy

Table 2. Grade level of respondents

Grade level	Frequency
6	10
7	13
8	8
9	8
10	11
11	7
12	8
TOTAL	65

Table 3. Sex of respondents

Sex	Frequency
Male	35
Female	30
TOTAL	65

**Religious characteristics of Korean MKs**

Either one or both parents of the respondents are engaged in religious ministries. Among these ministries are directly church-related mission work, such as church planter or one who establishes churches, pastor, and leadership trainer for local pastors. Other ministries include medical missions, teaching, and compassionate ministry.

Whatever their ministry, Korean missionary parents, in consonance with Borden’s (2000) observation, still place prime value on education for their children. Along with other indicators in the study, this may be inferred from area of residence relative to the school. A large majority of respondents indicate living in the Rizal area, where Faith Academy is located, including in nearby dormitories. Few indicate living in other places considerably far from school (e.g., Quezon City, Makati City, Pasig City, Mandaluyong City).

Not surprisingly, attendance in Korean churches using Korean service is far more customary than in English services of either international or local churches. While there have been times that these Korean MKs attended services in local churches that use the local language, these were very infrequent. From attendance in church services, it may be construed that respondents are exposed mainly to Korean and western cultures as opposed to the local culture.

**Cross-cultural experiences of Korean MKs**

Like MKs in general, Korean MKs at Faith Academy have high mobility and, correspondingly, rich cross-cultural experience. Since Faith Academy aims to educate

children of missionaries serving the Asia-Pacific region, the cross-cultural experience of its Korean students, in terms of countries visited and schools attended, is reflective of this regional focus (see Tables 4-7). Additionally, visits to America and Europe are rather common (55 of the 65 students). Somewhat less common but noteworthy nonetheless is the number of those who have studied in America and Europe (19).

More than half (33) of these adolescent Korean students had attended Korean schools – whether in Korea or elsewhere – before entering Faith Academy (see Table 7). Meriting special mention as a Korean school previously attended is Hankook Academy, attended by 15 students in the sample, which is the first and only regular Korean MK school in the Philippines. What is interesting to note is that while Hankook Academy was established to educate Korean MKs in particular, 1 out of 4 Korean missionaries prefers instead to send his children to Faith Academy, a highly westernized school.

Following Back’s (2002) observation that the period of cross-cultural experience is a more crucial factor in identity formation than the frequency of experience, it may be said that the students’ experiences in the aforementioned western countries, as reflected in Tables 5 and 7, are long enough to be of considerable influence.

Table 4. Countries respondents have visited\*

Country	Frequency
Korea	51
Philippines	55
American and European countries	24
Other Asian countries	22
No answer	3

\*multiple response (MR); N=65

Table 5. Duration of visit to abovementioned countries\*

Duration	Frequency
One year or less	39
More than 1 yr - 3 yrs	20
More than 3 yrs - 5 yrs	16
More than 5 yrs - 10 yrs	31
More than 10 yrs	31
Every summer	3
Many times	2
Don't know	2
No answer	7

\*MR; N=65

Table 6. Countries where the respondents had attended school\*

Country	Frequency
Korea	33
Philippines	65
American and European countries	19
Other Asian countries	4
No answer	3

\*MR; N=65

Table 7. Respondents' duration of stay in school\*

Duration of stay	Frequency
One year or less	61
More than 1 yr - 3 yrs	57
More than 3 yrs - 5 yrs	20
More than 5 yrs – 10 yrs	17
More than 10 yrs	5
No answer	1

\*MR; N=65

As shown in Table 8, the dominant language used in the schools attended is English (103), followed by Korean (51) and Filipino (38). Many students have experienced local education, but, with the exception of Korean schools, the local language is not commonly used. In the Philippines, English remains one of the dominant mediums of instruction.

Table 8. Language used in the schools attended by the respondents\*

Language	Frequency
English	103
Korean	51
Filipino/Tagalog	38
Chinese	5
French	3
Pidgin	1

\*MR; N=65

Participants in the peer group discussion confirmed that they use English in school but that they speak mainly Korean at home. They learn Korean and other facets of Korean culture mainly from their parents. Their reasons for mastering English are varied, ranging from necessity to pressure, again, from parents. Dolyean, for one, says that it is not so much a liking for English as it is a realization that English leads to better understanding of other lessons:

Dolyean: It's like, if you don't understand vocabulary or different, hard words like in history . . . English tells you about the vocabulary words you don't understand. Then English leads to other subjects . . . makes me understand more . . . If I took English out, it would be, like, I wouldn't learn other subjects because I wouldn't understand . . .

For those who had spent a considerable period of study in the homeland, English is especially tasking. Brian, for example, finds difficulty in English because he was already about 10 years old when he first came over. In Korea, he was only taught very basic English:

Brian: My least (favorite) subject is English because it's really hard for me – especially when it comes to essay writing. I came here when I was like 9 or 10, so it's really hard to write or read. I can read but there are, like, hundreds of words that I don't know. I guess I need to work on that. So, for me, it's like the hardest subject.

Tim also finds English very challenging, but in a way radically different from Brian's predicament:

Tim: In school, the subject I find most challenging is English. I don't want to be labeled as an ESL. I don't really have an excuse not to be good – proficient in English – because I left Korea when I was two-and-a-half years old. I've been speaking English since then. And my parents have always been asking me if I get good grades in English – especially because of the fact that I'm Korean.

For Sion, who has been living in the Philippines for most of his life, it was actually English that 'saved' him when he studied for a year in Korea. He was failing miserably in Math because the Korean educational system standard for Math was quite high. He excelled in English because his classmates were still studying the alphabet while he was already into grammar.

### *School community*

Sports top the list of after-school activities (59) that the respondents engage in, while after-school academics (39) and religious activities (34) rank second and third, respectively (see Table 9). After-school academics include Saturday school for Korean subjects, English lessons, and French language tutoring. What is

interesting to note in this table is the number of responses indicating non-involvement (29) in after-school activities.

Table 9. Kinds of after-school-activities attended by respondents\*

Kind of activity	Frequency
Sports	59
Academics-related	39
Religious	34
Music and the arts	26
Socials	16
None	29

\*MR; N=65

When read from the perspective of conflicting values between western education and Korean education, data on after-school activities became even more revealing. In the peer group discussion, it was found that Korean parents tend to view education in terms of academics; while western education, like the one found at Faith Academy, tends toward a holistic approach that includes sports and other extracurricular activities. Tim makes the following observation:

Tim: In some ways there would be conflict. Korean parents really go and push their children for academics to pass. Whereas in an American system like it is in Faith – and if you’re planning to go to college or a university in the States – they ask you to look at a lot of extracurricular activities, a lot more than they would in Korea. That’s now being made to conflict with family values, I think.

The penchant of Korean parents to ‘push’ their children in academics is elaborated further in this exchange:

Brian: I agree with Tim. [I]n Faith there are not only the academic things, but [also] the other things like sports or like other activities. But most of the Korean parents, they look at the academic things [and] sort of push their children to study hard and get a good grade. I know of some other Korean parents who also push you to study . . . and who also tell them to do the other things. I guess it’s like telling your children, yeah, you need to be good at this, you need to be good at that, so that when you go to college . . .

Boram: I think a pretty good example would be when report cards come out. Usually, American students or whoever they are - they'd be happy with like a B or a C. They'd be okay with it. Whereas, Korean students would start stressing out because they've got a lot of Bs. And it's not because it's a bad grade - but it's not what their parents expect of them. They might have tried their hardest, but they might go home and be grounded or something because they've got bad Bs.

Although their parents' insistence on academic excellence makes life harder for them, the participants view this in a positive light, given the reality of going back to Korea in the future:

Tim: They really stress that you need to get a good grade because [parents think] in an American [system], you don't really have to go for further education after high school. ... Whereas in Korea, basically, your social connections are made in the university, and where you attend. That's where your job is going to be decided . . . and how well you're paid.

When faced with difficulty in particular subjects, Korean students usually go to their friends or fellow classmates and senior students for help. At times, those living in dormitories likewise seek help from dorm parents. Teachers are kept in reserve as a last resort.

Consistent with the pattern of association found in church attendance, Korean adolescent MKs at Faith Academy have more Korean and Western friends than local Filipino friends (see Table 10). This is quite telling, considering that the Philippines is not only the host country, but also purportedly a mission field.

Table 10. Number and nationalities of friends

Number	Korean	American/ European	Filipino	Other Asian
None	9	20	36	28
1 to 3	17	12	11	19
4 to 6	11	9	4	1
7 to 9	6	16	0	6
10 or more	17	0	3	0
Don't know	1	1	1	1
No answer	4	7	10	10
TOTAL	65	65	65	65

Peer group discussion reveals that the reason Korean MKs have more American friends is the sheer number of Americans studying at Faith Academy. The enrolment data cited earlier, showing Americans as comprising a majority of the total school population for SY 2004-2005, support this contention.

Friends chosen may either be outgoing or shy, but they are chosen, mainly, because they are easy to get along with. Brian and Dolyean express this much in the peer group discussion:

Brian: Most of my friends [are] easy to hang out with. We go to the mall and watch movies and stuff – feel comfortable.

Dolyean: People usually move around in groups. I'm not that type of person. But sometimes I would like to join their group. And then, we just see each other, and there's some kind of feeling, like we're okay to be with each other, we trust each other. Most of my American friends are outgoing. If they see a person they don't know, they just go to that person and start getting to know each other. And then getting to be much closer.

At times, who your friends are may depend on the environment or where you are at the moment. Sion gives this observation:

Sion: I've only been to two countries – Korea and the Philippines... Well, I tend to hang out with a lot of Americans. But it depends where I am. If I'm in the dorm, I hang out with Koreans. But when I go to school, I hang out with Americans, some Canadians...

Boram and Sion share most of their thoughts and feelings with American friends, whom they regard as “real close” because they have known them since their arrival in the Philippines and at Faith Academy. However, others apparently have reservations about sharing innermost thoughts with non-Koreans. This indicates their sensitivity to cultural differences, as revealed in this exchange with Brian:

Facilitator: When you really want to talk about the deeper things in life...

Brian: I choose Koreans. I think it's a cultural thing because I think they can understand much easier or better. [With] American friends, I haven't really talked with them [about] deeper things – so I don't know about their responses. So I guess I don't know more about them than Koreans. So I talk with Koreans.

Brian: If I had a fight or something – it’s [usually] with Koreans rather than Americans. I’m closer with them. So [if] I have a conflict with my [Korean] friend, I talk to the other [Korean] friend all about it. If an American had a conflict with me, I would just rather go straight at him and talk about it. But for Koreans, I just can’t go straight forward ...

Facilitator: So, like if you’ve got a beef against an American friend you go and talk to him straight about it.

Brian: Yeah. Koreans are different. Americans don’t mind [being straightforward]. If I go straightforward and talk [directly with Koreans], they’re going to be really mad [and] get angry or something.

*Media preferences*

Data from the survey as well as the media diary point to the music player as the most frequently used, and possibly most favored, medium (see Table 11). Data from the survey and media diary tend to support each other and differences in rankings are due to the limited period during which the respondents were asked to keep a media diary. Apparently, media use is for both entertainment (i.e., the music player, movies, and cable TV) and information (i.e., computer and the Internet) purposes.

Table 11. Ranking of media according to frequency of use in survey and media diary

Media forms	Rank in survey	Rank in media diary
Music player (CD/MP3 player)	1	1
Movies	2.5	6
Computer	2.5	4
Internet (whether broadband or dial-up)	4	2
Cable TV	5	3
Free TV	6	7
Cell phone	-	5

However, in terms of time spent using their favorite media, daily usage is on the low side (see Table 12). As revealed by the survey data, typical use of each preferred medium is only for an hour or less among Korean MKs at Faith Academy.

Table 12. Time spent using favorite medium\*

Duration of media use	Frequency
30 minutes or less	56
More than 30 minutes to 1 hour	53
More than 1 hour to 2 hours	49
More than 2 hours to 3 hours	13
More than 3 hours to 5 hours	3
More than 5 hours	9
Don't know	3
No answer	9

\*MR; N=65

This pattern is likewise reflected in the four-day media use diary. Within the period, use of the preferred medium was more commonly between one to two hours (see Table 13). Data thus indicate that the Korean MKs are not ‘hardcore’ media consumers as daily media use is a low three hours or less each day.

Table 13. Time spent with favorite medium over a four-day period\*

Duration of media use	Frequency
Less than an hour	16
1 hour - less than 2 hours	27
2 hours - less than 3 hours	20
3 hours to less than 4 hours	16
4 hours to less than 5 hours	8
5 hours and more	4

\*MR; N=11

Survey results indicate that western programs (82) enjoy wider popularity than even Korean programs (42) among the Korean MKs (see Table 14).

Table 14. Country of origin of favorite television program\*

Country	Frequency
American and European countries	82
Korea	42
Philippines	1
Other Asian countries	1

\*MR; N=65

Apparently, media consumption among Korean adolescent MKs at Faith Academy tends toward western and Korean cultural products rather than local ones. Again, the pattern of association is consistent with that of religious and personal communities previously cited.

*Ascertaining cultural identity*

The study participants considered themselves Korean, although in varying degrees. Brian, who has been in the Philippines for a relatively shorter period, is quite certain of going back to Korea and marrying a Korean girl. Sion, who has been in the Philippines for some time now, is concerned that other people do not immediately see him as Korean because of the color of his skin, which actually makes him look more like a Filipino (Sion actually spoke Tagalog and Cebuano once). Their responses, as well as those of the other participants, manifest the various forms of identity negotiation that these adolescent Korean MKs grapple with:

Tim: Personally, I tend to hang out with other nationals more than Koreans. I guess, we all forget the kind of nationality we are. We are just friends. [But] when I go home my dad is usually strong on reminding me that I am Korean and I have to live a Korean life. And I, maybe, get discriminated because I'm Korean. He kids me and kicks me back to reality. But when I come back to Faith, I do sometimes forget . . . just kind of lose my cultural identity, I guess.

Sion: Well, basically, we are Koreans. Like Tim, I kind of not forget but miss the fact that I'm Korean because I've lived in the Philippines most of my life. And I talk English much more than Korean . . .

Boram: I don't think that I will forget the fact that I'm Korean . . . but . . . I don't know. It's kinda hard because I was born here. I was born in Baguio, and then we moved to the States, and then we came back to the Philippines. I never really lived in Korea before. We go furloughs every summer to the States. [When] my friends hear me speaking Korean for the first time, they say, 'Oh, I thought you didn't speak in Korean.'

Brian: I . . . Korean? I've been living in Korea until I was nine years old and I went to elementary school in Korea – unlike the other people here – and I guess I like Korea. And when I stay at home in Davao, I speak Korean with my parents. And I guess most of my close friends are Koreans. So I just like being Korean I guess.

Dolyean: I do like Korea. I would like to live there because . . . I really haven't been there for a long time. The last time I went to Korea, I wished I could just stay there, but I had to come back [here]. But even though I like Korea, I like to go around, you know, because I haven't seen other countries. I like, seeing other people, learning other cultures . . .

## Summary and Conclusion

Findings of this research indicate that local cultural influence does not figure prominently in the identity formation of Korean adolescent MKs at Faith Academy. Although the ministries of their parents are mainly local-church related, they are, themselves, hardly involved with the local culture.

Instead, personal community indicators, such as the nationality of friends, church attendance, and media consumption, consistently show strong western cultural influences. Korean adolescent MKs at Faith Academy, by choice and circumstance, have more Korean and American friends than Filipino friends. Although attendance in English service in the international churches is low compared to attendance in Korean service in Korean churches, it is much higher than attendance in English and Filipino services in the local churches combined. In terms of media use, the Korean adolescent MKs consume more western-oriented programs through cable TV than local programs through free TV. Further, they are inclined to spending media time alone, listening to music and using the computer.

Aside from the westernized school system, another factor that reinforces western influence is that the host country is itself, at least in the urban centers, a highly westernized nation. English language use among Filipinos and relatively easy access to western cultural products and lifestyles in the Philippines make it difficult at times on the part of Korean MKs to distinguish between local culture and western culture.

But unlike western TCKs, the Korean adolescent MKs' acculturation to western elements, as gleaned from the peer group discussion, is apparently a deliberate, if not an anxious, experience. It is regulated by the dynamic tension between, on the one hand, learning western skills and concepts as part of a general effort to enable them to succeed in school and eventually compete on the global stage, and, on the other, the impending possibility of going back to a highly monocultural and monolingual society that is Korea.

They virtually live in a yellow submarine, directly conscious of the need to keep their Korean identity, while, at the same time, taking on board whatever western-style education and influences their circumstances may allow.

## Implications and Recommendations

While Korean MKs at Faith Academy share in common with other MKs and TCKs' high mobility and rich cultural experience, perhaps the most outstanding thing they share is a resolve to make do of their circumstances, making any place

they happen to be in their home. Tim expresses this most poignantly in the peer group discussion:

... Most of the time dreams don't come true and so ... I just work [and go] where God takes me. In reality, I may not settle down in any one place. My family [has] never lived in one spot more than four years. We've always been moving around, and so ... Everywhere is my home.

The difference lies in the particular circumstances of Korean MKs who do not adjust well to western culture or are faced with the ever-present prospect of going back home to live without proper preparation, especially when it comes to pursuing higher education in the Korean system. Perhaps, these are the ones for whom the epithet FCK properly belong.

On the one hand, it may be too much to ask of international schools alone to address this problem. As Boram puts it in the peer group discussion:

... I also think it's also very hard to prepare fully because there are so many different nationalities. They [the school] can't prepare you for every situation you're going to have [and] all the different people who are going to stay with in the future. Like, some are going back to the British system, some are going back to the Korean system ... back to the States, Australia, you know. You can't really prepare them all for their own unique situation.

On the other, given the escalating number of Korean missionaries who bring their children to the mission field, it may be worth considering a Korean international MK school that will address the particular needs of Korean MKs and prepare them for a life back home.

In this regard, a reassessment of the curriculum and pedagogy of Hankook Academy may be in order. It will also be worthwhile to investigate other international MK schools around the world and to find out the nature and circumstances of Korean TCKs and FCKs. Due to the limitations of this study and the character of the Philippine culture, results are not applicable to all international MKs schools. Concomitantly, as previously mentioned, more studies from an Asian perspective regarding the growing TCK phenomenon are in order.

Media consumption among Korean MKs needs further investigation in light of finding out possibilities of furthering education and ministry through media, and engendering ties with the home country. Arirang TV is of particular interest.

Finally, the problem of Korean MKs, TCKs, and FCKs is not only the responsibility of educators, parents, missionaries, media practitioners, and international schools. It may likewise be the responsibility of the Korean educational system, should it decide to institute broad changes that would help students either to cope or keep in stride with the dynamics of globalization.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Expatriates of common cultural heritage once lived together in enclaves or closed communities, often self-contained, where they continued to share cultural elements of their home country, aside from enjoying in varying degree whatever amenities and products are brought over. In recent years, expatriates have come to live in open communities together with local residents of the host country and, at times, with expatriates of other nationalities. In this situation, assimilation of or integration into the local culture becomes, if it is not necessitated, at least more compelling.
- <sup>2</sup> *Missionary kids bring diverse cultures to U.* <http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/archives/2004/10/12/news/11055.shtml>
- <sup>3</sup> In a 2003-04 report, Korea Research Institute for Missions (KRIM) has the number of Korean missionaries at 10,422, with 163 mission agencies in 164 countries. Retrieved August 25, 2004, from <http://krim.org>
- <sup>4</sup> Global Mission Fellowship (GMF), quoted in S.W. Jae (2002), reports 511 missionaries in 1986. After 10 years, the number increased to 4,402, and in 2001, it was 9,133. The number has increased more than 20 times since 1986.
- <sup>5</sup> Some of these religious projects employ methods called *church planting*. See for example, [http://www.crosssearch.com/Ministry/Missions/Church\\_Planting/](http://www.crosssearch.com/Ministry/Missions/Church_Planting/)
- <sup>6</sup> Faith Academy in Rizal, Philippines, a member of the Association of Christian Schools International, is the largest school in the world for missionary children. It was established as an international Christian school primarily for children of missionaries in Asia. Over 100 evangelical mission agencies send their children to Faith Academy, which also has a branch in Davao. The student population is composed of some 19 nationalities, with over 100 professional staff members attending to their needs. The school offers both American and British curricula, and is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and by the University of Cambridge for International General Certificate of Secondary Education. More than 95% of Faith Academy's graduates pursue higher education. [Source: Faith Academy AVP]
- <sup>7</sup> These studies are cited in Kim's (2001) doctoral dissertation, *Korean High School Missionary Kids: Perceptions of Living in Other Cultures*, Deerfield, Illinois: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.
- <sup>8</sup> The models used in this paper are borrowed from the previous study of Kwon & Deza (2004) entitled *Understanding Korean MKs in International Schools: A Case Study at Faith Academy* [Unpublished research paper, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication].
- <sup>9</sup> For SY 2004-2005, there were 132 Korean students at Faith Academy, 93 of whom were adolescents from Grades 6-12.

## References

- Baek, A. K. (2000). 선교사 자녀들의 정체성 형성에 관한 연구; 서울에 거주하는 한국 선교사 자녀를 중심으로 [A study on MK(Missionary Kids)'s identity formation: Focused on MK living in Seoul]. Master of Arts thesis, Ewha Woman's University, Seoul, Korea. KERIS 08008780.
- Back, I. S. (Spring 2000). MCOS 대회의 의의와 한국 MK 학교 교육의 나아갈 길 [The meaning of MCOS meeting in Korea and the future of Korean MK school education]. *MK Journal 15*. Retrieved July 17, 2004, from [http://www.mknest.org/mkj/15/cs\\_015/ htm](http://www.mknest.org/mkj/15/cs_015/htm)
- Back, I. S. (Fall 1999). 한국 MK 사역의 현황과 새로운 도전들 [The present situation of Korean MK ministry and new challenges]. *MK Journal 13*. Retrieved June 17, 2004, from [http://www.mknest.org/mkj/13/cs\\_013.htm](http://www.mknest.org/mkj/13/cs_013.htm)
- Ban, S. S. (2002). 한국 선교사 자녀 교육을 위한 홈스쿨링에 관한 연구 [A study of home schooling for Korean MKs education]. Master of Arts thesis, Goshin University, Busan, Korea. KDMT1200238655.
- Cho, S. H. (2003). 한국 선교사 자녀 케어를 위한 공동 양육 프로그램 연구: 필리핀 Faith Academy 의 기숙사와 태국 푸른 초장을 중심으로 [A study on the communal nurture program of Korean MKs: based on the boarding house of Faith Academy in the Philippines and Green Field in Thailand]. KERIS 09390296.
- Choi, S. J. (1998). A study of cultural identity among Korean missionary kids at Faith Academy in the Philippines. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, Rizal, Philippines.
- Choi, W. Y. (2000). 선교사 자녀 교육 진단과 제안 [Analysis and suggestion on MK education]. Master of Arts thesis, JangShin Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea. KDMT1200015669.
- Han, D. S. (1997). 선교사가 본 한국선교사 자녀 교육의 현실 [A missionary's perspective on the present educational situation of the children of Korean missionary]. Retrieved June 17, 2004, from <http://kcm.co.kr/kcm/number18/kims/rep4.html> <http://www.tckworld.com/>
- Jae, J. W. (2000). 선교사 자녀 돌봄을 위한 부모의 국내준비 [Parents' preparation for the care of missionary kids in Korea]. Master of Arts thesis, ChongShin Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea. KERIS 08213741.
- Jae, S. W. (2002). 한국 선교사 자녀교육 집중 연구: 선교사 자녀 교육 기관 중심으로 [A study on the education of Korean missionary kid: Focused on the educational institutions. Master of Arts thesis, ChongShin University, Seoul, Korea. KERIS 08955231.
- Jonathan, F. B. (2000). *Confucius meets Piaget: An educational perspective on ethnic Korean children and their parents*. Seoul, Korea: NP.
- Kang, E. Y. (1999). 한국인 선교사 자녀 교육을 위한 한 연구 [A study on the education of Korean Missionary Kids]. Master of Arts thesis, JangShin Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea. KERIS 07333066.
- Kim, E. M. (2001). Korean high school missionary kids: Perceptions of living in other cultures. Doctoral dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. KERIS 08755313.

- Kim, J. H. (2000). 한국 선교사 자녀의 정체성 형성에 미친 부모역할 [The role of parents in the identity formation of Korean MKs: Based on the college students in Korea]. *기독교교육연구*, 12 (1). KERIS 19623147.
- Kim, O. J. (2003). 캠프를 통한 한국 선교사 자녀 상담 연구 [A study of MK counseling through camp ministry] Master of Arts thesis, Asia Union Theological Seminary, Gyunggi, Korea. KDMT1200326307.
- Korea World Mission Association (1997, May 12). 선교사가 본 한국선교사 자녀교육의 현실 [A perspective of a missionary on the matter of children's education]. Retrieved June 17, 2004, from <http://www.kcm.co.kr/kcm/number18/kims/rep4.HTML>
- Korea World Mission Association (KWMA). (1993). 한국 선교사 자녀교육 정책협의 결의문 [A statement of the policy on Korean Missionary Kids' education]. Retrieved June 17, 2004, from <http://kcm.co.kr/number18/kims/policy.html>
- Lee, B. C. (2002). 선교사 자녀 사역의 종류와 자질 [Qualification and variation of MK ministry] Master of Arts thesis, Hapdong Theological Seminary, Suwon, Korea. KDMT1200223390.
- Lee, E. J. (2003). 한국 선교사 자녀 대안 교육 가운데 홈 스쿨링의 필요성 [The need for home schooling as an alternative way of Korean MK education]. Master of Arts thesis, Hapdong Theological Seminary, Suwon, Korea.
- Lee, M. Y. (1997). 한국 선교사 자녀의 정체성 형성을 위한 교육 과정 [Curriculum design for the Korean identity among Korean MKs]. Master of Arts thesis, Asia Union Theological Seminary, Gyunggi, Korea. KDMT1199731429.
- Moon, S. C. (2004). Report on Korean missionary. In 2003-4 한국 선교 핸드북 [2003-4 Korean Mission Handbook]. Retrieved August 25, 2004, from Korea Research Institute for Missions Web site: <http://www.krim.org>
- Pollock, D. C. & Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *The third culture kid experience: Growing up among worlds*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.
- Park, J. H. (2003). 한국 선교사 자녀 교육 현실에 대한 방안 [A proposal for Korean MK education]. Master of Arts thesis, GaeYack Theological Seminary, Gwangju, Korea. KDMT1200305403.
- Shin, J. Y. (2002). 해외 주재 한국 선교사 자녀를 위한 이중 언어 교육 연구 [A study on the bilingual education for Korean MKs living abroad]. Master of Arts thesis, Goshin Theological Seminary, Busan, Korea. KDMT1200238653.
- Shin, S. A. (2002). 한국 선교사 자녀 교육에 관한 고찰: 선교기관들의 정책을 중심으로 [Analysis of Korea MK education: Focus on the policies of the mission agencies]. Master of Arts thesis, Hapdong Theological Seminary, Suwon, Korea. KDMT1200223380.

---

*Alfonso B. Deza is currently finishing his doctoral studies in communication at the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.*

*Dong Hwan (Bill) Kwon is a Korean missionary of the Church of Nazarene, serving the Asia-Pacific region. He is teaching M.A. Christian Communication at the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APTS) in Taytay, Rizal. As part of his ministry assignment and with a scholarship grant from the United Board of Christian Higher Education in Asia (UBCHEA), he is enrolled in the Ph.D. Communication program of the UPCMC where his subject area focus is religion, media, and culture.*