

Issues of Raising the First Children in Space

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A list of issues about “Raising Children in Space Settlements” is presented.

General topics include:

What physical support is needed to raise children in space?

What robotic and remote support from Earth might be provided?

What is a minimum number of adults to raise children?

Is a nuclear family the best family model?

Is it ethical to raise children in a (possibly) unsafe environment?

Is it ethical to raise children who might not be able to live on Earth?

What about genetic diversity in an early space settlement?

What impact would children in space have on financial/political support of that space project?

What impact would children in space have on Earth’s society, especially impact on Children on Earth?

The list of issues was developed as talking-points for a series of formal discussion groups which I have run at various local meetings and national space related conferences. During these discussions, I display numerous images of children or families in future space settlements, science fiction, or similar situations. These images have been omitted, but they are currently available in a powerpoint presentation at MarsHome.org/docs : “First Families in Space Presentation”

This will be of interest to anyone who wishes to present the concepts of permanent settlement of space, to the general public.

I. Introduction

The question “When do you think the first baby will be born in Space?” – is a question I have often received after giving a presentation related to Space Settlement to a public audience. That recurring question prompted me to make the following list of topic on issues related to raising children in future space settlements.

I have used this list as topics of discussion a half dozen times, include formal ‘open discussion’ sessions which I moderated at Mars Society conferences and International Space Development Conferences (ISDC) run by the National Space Society, and other meetings.

II. Outline of Issues

Issues related to raising children in space were divided into these general categories. They will be expanded later.

Why?

Why Not?

Support needed:

Physical, supplies, robotic,
remote support

Family Model:

Nuclear family, extended family, other
Minimum number of adults and children

Equipment, supplies, cost?

When ?

Ethics:

Unsafe? When?

Effect on the Children, parents, society, Earth

III. Reasons FOR Children in Space

Human Nature / Destiny

Emphasize Permanence of Settlement

Demonstrate partial self-sufficiency

Life-Boat for Humanity

Benefit to adults:

- Parent / GrandParent / Teacher role,
- Recruiting & keeping crew,
- Love, Purpose in life

Interest to children & adults on Earth

Safer & Lower Cost than
interplanetary transportation

Finance by Wealthy Parents / Surrogate Parents

Children may adapt better to Mars conditions, 3/8 g

Accidental Conception (kids happen)

Deliberate, Unauthorized Pregnancy

Interesting Topic of Discussion at this meeting

IV. Reasons to NOT have Kids in Space

Parent's Time

Expense:

- Equipment & Supplies from Earth
- Mars Materials: food, air, water ...
- Earth-side support (teachers)

Safety, bad press if accident

Possible Medical Problems

- Adapting from 3/8 to 1 g
- Radiation

Rebellious teenager who knows how to open the airlock?

Little Choice for Child - Uncertainty of Children's Interests & Abilities

Independence of second-generation - why should Earth support base

V. Family Models

What are good family models for a first Mars base?

Nuclear Family (nuclear powered?)

- two parents, single family house (unlikely)

Extended Family

- imagine 12 adult researchers, half are parents, others act as 'aunts' & 'uncles', jointly raising 8 children.

Tribe or Village

Single adults

Unbalanced Gender ratio

Group Marriages

- impact on support by religions & governments

Surrogate Parents / "Uncles & Aunts"

Expect older children to help

- growing food, household work, and raising younger siblings

"Grandparents" raise children - those who have difficulty with outdoor exploration, due to age or injury

VI. Equipment & Supplies for Children

Extra of everything:

- Air, Water, Food,
- Habitat Space, Play space

Processed food / baby food

Pressure suits,

Clothing, sizes

Medical Equipment

Education supplies

Pets

Toys

Extra Radiation protection

- for both growing children and fertile adults

Safety equipment - "child-proof airlocks", etc.

VII. Ethics of Raising Children in a Harsh Environment

Is it ethical to raise children in a Harsh / Unknown environment?

Yes - Long history of parents making decisions for children, including immigration.

Danger:

Harvests fail?

Habitats fail?

Shipments from Earth might not arrive?

Pressure suits fail?

Radiation?

Media attention on children if base is doomed.

Media attention affect children's personalities?

Free Passage to Earth ?

May not be able to adjust to Earth at 1 gee.

Will they be happy to be born & raised in Space?

Acknowledgments and References

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