It can be assumed that a number of well-educated missiologists would not easily agree to the idea that the voices of the poor and displaced bear the potential and capability to substantially contribute to mission in relevant and effective ways. Can the poor’s lived experience of conversion and missional witness be valid and reliable sources of information for contemporary and relevant mission theology? Does spirituality have an impact on the resiliency of displaced people? And what is the essential nature of family resilience in new Christian converts who have committed their lives for God’s mission? Missiological questions of this kind are seamlessly interwoven with the research topic of my doctoral dissertation, “The Experience of Family Resilience in Buddhist Background Believers within the Broader Context of the Experience of Displacement in Myanmar.”

This short article seeks to illustrate the outcomes of a pilot study conducted with one exemplar family that resides in Karen State in Myanmar. The purpose of conducting this field-based research project was to develop a specific and unique research instrument that could guide the research and writing throughout the implementation of my field-based research. Specific attention was given to issues of validity and reliability as the research instrument was prepared. The goal of this pilot study was to apply the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology and to see how people in the field would respond to this methodology and to identify whether phenomenology can be confirmed as a valid and reliable methodology for researching family resilience in the context of multidisciplinary...
missiology research. Further, the overall goal of this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry was to come to a deep-layered comprehension of what the essential nature of experiencing resilience and thriving means for Seventh-day Adventist lay ministers in Myanmar. With this study, I am particularly interested in exploring the experience of religion and spiritual life in resilient displaced missionary families who converted from Buddhism to Christianity.

During various sequences of this pilot research study for the Doctor of Missiology, research participants convicted me that devoted Buddhists in Burma do carry a deep desire for serving and worshipping the God of absolute authority, the Creator God—in spite of their commitment to formal religion with its adherence to idol worship. When Hsha Paw fled from forced labour in Burma to a refugee camp in Thailand in 2000, she strongly held on to worshipping her Buddha image that she had brought with her to Thailand. Worshipping the Buddha image provided her with intergenerational resilience. Hsha Paw believed that image worship held her in connection with the true God. She and her extended family members did not have access to formal Buddhist doctrines or sacred texts. Instead, their devotion was to a common Buddhist faith, and worship practices filled their lives with confidence in being true God-worshippers.

However, when a Christian lay minister approached Hsha Paw with the words, “You are the daughter of the biblical Creator God,” this Karen woman embarked on a journey that changed forever her image of self and God. God himself answered her burning questions: Who is the true God to be worshipped? Is it Buddha or is it Jesus? And since Hsha Paw personally encountered her Creator God, she promised to be obedient to his will and call to mission. Hsha Paw and her family became Christ followers and currently serve displaced children and families in Burma.

Whereas I will further elaborate on the nature of this family’s faith experience in the context of my phenomenological resilience study, this preview into the unique faith experience of this family from Myanmar (pilot research participants) helps to emphasize the light their story sheds on my deeper understanding of theology and mission. In this paper, I propose that a mission theology of devotion is rooted in the experience of an intimate relationship with the Trinitarian God and the restoration of God’s image in his followers. This builds the divine foundation for single-minded worship and obedience, which is the ultimate purpose of being human and becoming Christ’s followers in his mission. This divine insight directly correlates with the core essence of what spirituality and mission means for this pilot research participating family: “Spiritual life means to be human and to do God’s work means to become human.” In order to discern and analyze the relationship of lived spirituality, resilience, and
mission endeavour in a cross-cultural context in trustworthy ways, I committed myself to study the Karen people’s cultural context “to understand the categories, assumptions, and logic the people use to construct their world” and to withhold premature judgments (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou 1999:22).

The phenomenological research findings of this paper were derived from a pilot study done in partnership with one displaced family from an ethnic Karen background. The problem statement of this family represents one major reason for ethnic minority displacement in Myanmar, which is forced labour commonly called *portering* by the Burmese military. The family reported, “Here in Myanmar it is not easy to work because the soldiers come to ask for a porter or to ask us to do ‘voluntary’ labour. But we don’t have things to offer [in exchange for their demands] because it is difficult for us to even find food.” There is no way to escape from forced labour except through displacement. Before the family in the pilot study chose to serve as missionaries in Myanmar, they found refuge in a camp in Thailand. The purpose of this pilot study was to determine the validity and reliability of phenomenological research methodology in a socio-political context.

The preliminary literature review done for this paper and one E-mail conversation with the Co-director of the Chicago Center for Family Health, Dr. Froma Walsh, quickly revealed an existing research gap in the sector of Internal Displacement. I decided to design my research questions for the interviews and focus groups along the lines of Froma Walsh’s framework and questionnaire. While the particular criteria for the sample selection are further described in the methodology section of this article, it is important to mention that the research participants in this pilot study represent a family that exemplifies resilience in the context of adversity that enabled them “to heal from painful experiences, take charge of their lives, and go on to live and love well” (Walsh 2016:251).

Their description of resilience in adversity underscores the mantra “problem-free-is-not-fully-prepared,” commonly used in the field of “positive youth development and casts a vision for young people [and their parents] who are active agents in their communities” (King and Clardy 2014:190). Therefore, I integrated the *Relational Development Systems Paradigm* (RDSP), which considers the theology of thriving in this hermeneutic phenomenology inquiry research. The Positive Psychology movement represents a social science perspective of optimal development and living. Therefore, Pamela Ebstyne King and William B. Whitney (2015) argue that a pressing question for the integration of psychology and theology is to consider what Christian theology suggests to be essential for humans to thrive. Throughout their literature, Lerner, Roeser, and Phelps (2008)
confirm that psychology’s claim of optimal development suggests that individuals have a repertoire of adaptive behaviours that are appropriate for their developmental context. However, he also expresses concern that psychology cannot make more than normative or conventional claims.

The author of this paper proposes that the selected methodology of Hermeneutic Phenomenology will provide adequate epistemological “tools” and attitudes to encounter the social, cultural, theological, and missiological complexity of the lifeworld and family resilience as a lived experience in displaced people. Further, in the realm of emerging studies on human thriving, optimal development, and positive outcomes in children, youth, and adults, I focus on the key strength of positive deviants, also called exemplar. In positive deviant research, outliers who succeed against all odds are in focus. This rests on the assumption that participants, who manifest the phenomenon under investigation in a highly developed manner, are experts who can provide valid input through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews (Matsuba, King, and Bronk 2013: loc 241).

The first part of this article elaborates on underlying theoretical frameworks and paradigms. It is important for the reader to note that theoretical frameworks need to be considered as an analytical style that functions as another lens to sharpen my perceptions and interpretations of the research data only after the coding process has been completed. This is followed by a section on research methodology and procedures as well as on the role of the researcher. The article continues with the outline of the contextual description of the research participants and concludes with textural, imaginative, and composite descriptions of this hermeneutic phenomenology inquiry.

**Theories and Paradigm Assumptions: Naturalistic Inquiry, Social Constructivism, and the Relational-Development-System-Paradigm (RDSP) in Homogenous Blend with Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Validity and Reliability in the Light of the Naturalistic Paradigm

As crucial and specific as the concepts surrounding validity and reliability are to empirical fact-based science, it likewise needs to be acknowledged that the researcher’s unique perspective, contextual experience, underlying theoretical assumptions, and particular frameworks emphasized in the study illuminate that such questions have a different relevance in phenomenology. The epistemological rationale behind this study of family resilience in displacement is deeply anchored
in the naturalistic paradigm, of which social constructivism is part. John W. Creswell and Dana L. Miller advanced a two-dimensional framework to provide the rationale for choosing validity procedures that are governed by two perspectives: (1) the researchers’ paradigm assumptions and (2) the lens researchers choose to validate their studies (2000:124-130).

Among others, Lincoln and Guba contributed to the emerging research paradigm that contradicts “the prevailing scientific paradigm [which] assumes that there is a single objective reality” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen 1993:11) but proposes that “context-unique complex questions cannot be generalized across human different settings” (13). While the naturalistic paradigm makes different assumptions about reality, objectivity, and generalization, it also proclaims that there are “multiple realities” which cannot be resolved “through rational processes or increased data” (14). This rings particularly true in the current life context of displaced children and families from Myanmar.

During a time of rapid change and increased levels of insecurity for Burmese refugees, migrants, and internally displaced people, all the political attempts towards democracy and peace building have not stopped the displacement. And as a case in point, this is how Erlandson and his research team summarize their position: “Multiple realities enhance each other’s meanings; forcing them to a single precise definition emasculates meaning” (15). Therefore, I am committed to establishing a qualitative research lens that respectfully uses subjective views of people who participate in this study. Further, this missiological study on resilience assumes that families’ particular reality in the experience of human thriving is not only socially, but also religiously, spiritually, and missionally constructed. Reality “is what participants perceive it to be” and “validity-as-reflexive-accounting” is “where researchers, the topic, and the sense-making process interact” (Creswell and Miller 2000:125). This will constitute the essence of my research perspective and action.

Validity and Reliability in the Light of Social Constructivism and Doing Phenomenology Research with Families in Mission

As mentioned above, Creswell and Miller argue that validity procedures require thinking beyond specific procedures. The lens and paradigm assumptions of a researcher are of paramount importance (2000:129). However, as Charles Van Engen summarizes, normally, in social science research, the concept of validity has to do with the question, “How can we be sure that we are collecting the right data in the right way? And the concept of reliability addresses the question, “How can we be sure that if the same approach were to be taken again, the same data
would be discovered?” (in Elliston 2011:113). Whereas Elliston affirms that researchers need to seek control over all the variables that may occur, except the dependent variable, that is, the outcome or resulting variable in experimental research, while the causal variable that causes change is identified (69, 70). However, he also acknowledges that in some church and mission situations it would be virtually impossible to do an experiment because one does not have the potential for maintaining control of the setting. And, in many cases it is not possible to manipulate the variables. Experimental research in missiology is often inappropriate because of the sovereignty of God in his mission (70).

Meanwhile, researchers hold the position that reliability needs to be measured by other indicators than “repeatability” and “generalizability” (Van Engen, in Elliston 2011:114, 118, Erlandson et al. 1993:14-16, Van Manen 2016:635, 644). According to my research methodology adviser Edyta Jankiewicz, “the impact of certain variables on other variables is not measured in phenomenological studies.” Van Manen suggests that “phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (2016:398). Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the internal meaning structures of lived experience, the study of essences, and aims to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences (421, 398). Phenomenology is not inductively or empirically derived as a science of empirical facts and scientific generalizations because generalizations may distract the inquirer’s ability to discern the uniqueness of human experience (635, 652). Van Manen and Buytendijk (Morse 1994: 131) refer to the “validating circle of inquiry” or “phenomenological nod” which confirms that a good phenomenological description is “validated by experience and validates lived experience.” Therefore, the author exclaims, “the only generalisation allowed by phenomenology is this: Never generalize” (744, 644).

The phenomenological question of this family resilience study is: *What is the essential nature of the lived experience of ‘family resilience’ for internally displaced Christian lay ministry families in Myanmar?* Cross-cultural studies done by Dunn, Miller, and Lareau on early socialization in the family confirm that human development of communicative competence depends on their “involvement in everyday cultural routines within families” (Corsaro 2015:95). The Constructivist Model in sociological studies proposes that “socialization is not only a matter of adaptation and internalization but also a process of appropriation, reinvention, and reproduction” (9, 10). William A. Corsaro coined the term interpretive reproduction. It is important to note that “the term interpretive captures
the innovative and creative aspects of children’s participation in society” and the term reproduction “captures the idea that children are not simply internalizing society and culture but are actively contributing to cultural production and change” (Corsaro 2015:18). Researching families’ lived experience in cross-cultural communities will reveal differing assumptions and perceptions of the meaning of resilience. Citing Charles Kraft (1996), Elliston says that “one’s worldview provides the deep level assumptions about issues of cause, classification or categorization, the relationship between the spiritual, social, and physical worlds, the relationship between an individual and the group, the relationship between a person and the material universe, and issues of time and events” (Kraft, in Elliston 2011:60). This is where trustworthiness comes in. And because phenomenology does not aim to explicate meanings specific to particular cultures, as in for example ethnography, but attempts to explicate meanings as people live them in their everyday existence and lifeworld (Van Manen 2016:43), I believe that the credibility of the study will become largely measured by trustworthiness.

Family Resilience in Context: The Relational Development System Paradigm (RDSP): Implications for Methodology Design and Research Inquiry

In the context of this study on family resilience, I cannot emphasize enough the significance of Charles Van Engen’s statement that “a particular theological understanding in a particular time and place, though holding many generalizable principal values, is in fact unrepeatable” (in Elliston 2011:114). This statement rings true and I agree with Van Engen’s conviction that empirical data gathered in a theology of mission area plays a subordinate role to assumptions, ideas, goals, and conceptual paradigms through which the data are being examined. And “evangelical mission theologians would add the assumption that truth is a unified whole to be found in God’s final, unique, unrepeatable and unified revelation, written in the Bible.” Thus, “the question of validity must be transformed into one of truth, and the matter of reliability must be seen as one of trust” (in Elliston 2011: 115).

This thesis could easily become interpreted as being in contradiction to the core principles and goals of phenomenology, namely to reflect the essence of the experience under investigation. Therefore, I will further elaborate in this section on the core of the chosen paradigm of this study and how this Relational Development System Paradigm correlates with the theological framework of Reciprocating Selves (RS). I will then close this section with an argument that expresses my commitment towards
the nature and procedures of phenomenology and how its intimate interconnection with the Relational Development System Theory and embedded Theology of Reciprocating Selves will finally work towards credibility, truth, and trustworthiness in this study.

A brief review of resilience science will disclose the rationale behind further epistemological considerations and set the stage for paradigm discussions. In the 1980s, Emily Werner “adopted” the classical term resilience to signal the move from an era of understanding children and childhood in terms of fragility towards invulnerability and strength (Damon 2004:16). “The interest in the strength of youth, the relative plasticity of human development (the capacity of organisms to change in response to varying conditions) and the concept of resilience coalesced in the 1990s to foster the development of the concept of positive youth development” (Lerner, Roeser, and Phelps 2008:607). The body of literature on resilience reveals an overwhelming consensus on defining the essence of resilience by following key notions such as, the ability to withstand and rebound from adversity; doing good or okay in terms of the quality of adaptation or of developmental outcomes; the process of healthy human development, ecological in nature, which cannot be developed by sheer willpower within the at-risk person; not simply an innate quality that children either possess or lack, but instead it is conceptualized as a capacity that changes over time in relation to a child’s changing contexts, vulnerabilities, competencies, developmental tasks, and environmental influences at any given time (Walsh 2002; Masten 2001; Bernard 2004; Brooks 2006) This present research inquiry is based on a large body of literature in the disciplines of Human Development, Positive Psychology, Trinitarian and Christological Anthropologies of Being and Becoming, Theological Anthropology, Biblical Anthropology, Theology of Change (worldview), World Religions, Spirituality, Family Systems Theory, Theology of Thriving, Resilience Science, and Positive Youth Development. Over the past two decades, the field of family therapy and childhood/youth studies has refocused its attention from a deficit-based lens to competence and strength in children and families (Walsh 2002:130; Damon 2004:20).

While the positive youth development approach recognizes the existence of adversities and developmental challenges that may affect children in various ways, it resists conceiving of the developmental process mainly as an effort to overcome deficits and risk. Instead, it begins with a vision of a fully able child eager to explore the world, gain competence, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world. (Damon 2004:20)
Richard Lerner, Jacqueline Lerner, Edmond Bowers, and G. John Geldhof describe the Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm as the “contemporary cutting-edge theoretical frame” because it emphasizes reciprocal bi-directional relations, represented as individual → context relations (2014:608). The focus on bi-directional relations allows a relational-functional perspective where a person contributes to one’s own development as well as to the lives of their family, friends, and the society (King and Clardy 2014:181). Pamela Ebstyn King from Fuller Theological Seminary adopted the term “The Reciprocating Self” for describing Trinitarian and Christological Anthropologies of Being and Becoming. King provides a Christian theological anthropology worldview that proposes a developmental teleology. Based on the acknowledgement that humans are made in the image of God and that Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God (Col 1:15), King envisions God’s purpose for human development in becoming a “reciprocating self by emphasizing the importance of conformity to Christ, individual uniqueness, relatedness, and reciprocity” (2016:216).

In response to a recent email-dialog with Pamela Ebstyn King about the developmental systems approach and reciprocating self model, the co-author of Reciprocating Self responded with the words: “I have found the whole PYD/Thriving Approach so consistent with a theological perspective.” These powerful words helped me to become engaged in the concepts of Positive Youth Development and Thriving. The interdisciplinary movement of PYD emphasizes strategies for young people into becoming fully reciprocating selves (King and Clardy 2014:187). The terms PYD and Thriving are often used interchangeably, but both concepts strive for optimal development in young people while thriving is defined as “a dynamic and purposeful process of individual → context interactions over time, through which the person and the environment are mutually enhanced” (185).

How will this theoretical framework relate to phenomenology and the establishment of validity through credibility, truth, and trustworthiness? In addition, what is needed in my proposed conceptual paradigms to examine data in truthful ways? First, scholars noted “that the embeddedness of all levels within history imbues temporality into individual → context relations, meaning there is the potential for plasticity, for organized and systematic change in these relations, across person, time, and place” (Lerner et al. 2014:609). Or said differently, methodological choices that use reductionist Cartesian approaches to development science are not sufficient to emphasize how individuals act in context and thus contribute to plastic relations. The focus on individuals “as active producers of their own environment” and on individual agency, family strength, and respect for developmental and contextual alteration across the life span.
is best instantiated by person-centered research approaches (Lerner et al. 2014:609-610). Second, since the question of validity must be transformed into one of truth and the matter of reliability must be seen as one of trust, Van Engen writes that research in biblical theology of mission searches for trustworthy and true perceptions concerning the church’s mission that are based on biblical and theological reflection, seeks to interface with the appropriate missional action, and creates a new set of values and priorities that reflect as clearly as possible the ways in which the church in a particular context may participate in God’s mission at a particular time (in Elliston 2011:118).

My research will focus on missionally engaged lay minister families who devoted their lives and service to people in Myanmar. A major part of the phenomenological inquiry will rest on interviews and focus groups. The semi-structured, in-depth type of research questions gives ample opportunity for theological and spiritual reflection. This will require the gift of intentionality and discernment from my side as a researcher. To establish trust and to identify truth, I fully commit myself to the phenomenological practice of thoughtfulness, a practice that has been described “as a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement—a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, what it means to live a life” (Van Manen 2016: loc 444, 453). To further strengthen credibility, the researcher’s interpretations of constructed realities will be re-presented in the format of a story to the families in order to be affirmed by research participants (Erlandson et al. 1993:30).

Methodology, Research Procedures, and Methods Applied in the Research Context of Cross-Cultural Resilience Science

Essential Components of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The goal of this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry is to come to a deep-layered comprehension of what the essential nature of experiencing resilience and thriving means for Seventh-day Adventist Lay ministers in Myanmar. With this study, I am particularly interested in exploring the experience of religion and spiritual life in resilient displaced missionary families who converted from Buddhism to Christianity. John W. Creswell (2013), Max van Manen 2016), and Clark Moustakas (1994), are leading authors in Qualitative Research who thoroughly describe that phenomenology methodology is a research of essences with the purpose to reduce individual experiences of a single concept/phenomenon that all research participants commonly experienced. The reality of an object is only
perceived within the meaning of individual experience and the theme of meaning derives from the “intentionality of consciousness.” As a practice of thoughtfulness and reflection, “research is a caring act: to care is to serve and to share our being with the one we love. We desire to truly know our loved one’s very nature” (Creswell 2013: loc 1694, van Manen 2016:333).

The Role of the Researcher

This section introduces the direction I wish to pursue as a researcher in this study. My personal experience with crisis and family resilience as a missionary in Southeast Asia were key experiences that triggered my compassion and commitment for families at risk and in adversity. However, graduate studies in global childhood studies at Fuller University were an eye-opener for the diversity and uniqueness of childhood experienced globally. Both, my personal and educational encounter with resiliency and thriving as essential parts of human development taught me that “we should refer questions of knowledge back to the lifeworld where knowledge speaks through our lived experiences” (van Manen 2016: loc 1084).

Van Manen’s words that “there exists a certain dialectic between question and method” and that “the method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one a [researcher in Missiology]” (2016:267) leave me with the profound conviction that phenomenology methodology and the Theology of the Reciprocating Self as part of the Relational System Approach are intimately linked. As a researcher, I understand hermeneutics as interpreting the “texts” of life (Creswell 2013: loc 1724) in the sense of “borrowing other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole human experience” (van Manen 2016: loc 1342).

However, in order to do theological reflection well, I agree with Creswell that we need a new definition of *epoche* or bracketing, “such as suspending our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity” (2013: loc 1805). From a missiological perspective, I consider the interviews with missionally active participants in the research as “doing theology.” Together, we will reflect back on family life and mission practice as an integrated whole. In *Ministry and Mission*, Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce elaborate on “The Four Voices Approach”:

As it sees practice as one of the places in which theology is disclosed, actions can be bearers of God’s grace and so we can learn about God
from studying what people of faith actually do—operant theology. This needs to be put alongside what people say about what they do, their espoused theology. If there is a tension between what people do and what they say they do, they will often turn to the Christian tradition for authoritative guidance—normative theology. (2013: xxx)

The fourth voice of theology is the formal voice. This Four Voices Approach as a methodological procedure in phenomenology will be helpful because “the task of theological research is to bring the four voices into conscious conversation so that all voices can be enriched” (Cameron and Duce 2013: xxxi). In Hermeneutic Phenomenology, it is my goal to bring all existing voices to speech while I acknowledge that the main research instrument in this methodology is the researcher herself. Throughout the entire research process, I will closely collaborate with an interpreter who is personally and professionally suited to contribute to the trustworthiness of the study. Van Manen states that “the human science researcher is a scholar-author who must be able to maintain an almost unreasonable faith in the power of language to make intelligible and understandable what always seems to lie beyond language” (2016:231). This claim rings true when I recall the intense process of the pilot case study project. In fact, I made the observation that the various steps of translation and transcription involved in the research are an opportunity for developing new skills in deciphering meaning.

Preliminary Methodological Design

First, it is important to alert the reader that the assessment framework as well as the research questions and data analysis are provided in the appendices. The assessment framework summarizes key processes in family resilience and growth characteristics as outlined in the assessment framework of Walsh, and the work of Lerner and others (2014). Described key processes and growth characteristics are frequently used in non-Western contexts and frequently appear in the literature as part of the cutting-edge relational development systems (RDS) research paradigm. It should be noted that given assessment frames and human development indicators have been utilized to inform the researcher about empirical observations and applications of reliable assessment frames and characteristics on the international field level. Therefore, I am encouraged to utilize Relational-Development-System-approved measures to inform the process of the textual and structural description and the composition of the essence of the phenomena “family resilience.” Thus, indicators and measures of Walsh’s assessment framework and growth characteristics of the “5 Cs Model”
will form the backbone of underlying paradigm assumptions, as indicated earlier in this article. In the 5 Cs Model for Positive Youth Development,

Research seeks to identify the individual and ecological relations that may promote thriving and, as well, that may have a preventive effect in regard to risk/problem behaviors. Thriving is understood as the growth of attributes that mark a flourishing, healthy young person, (e.g., the characteristics termed the “Five Cs” of PYD—competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring). (Lerner et al. 2014:620)

In the book *Strengthening Family Resilience*, Walsh outlines a systemic view of resilience that further describes characteristics that belong to the belief systems, organizational processes, and communication processes in families. The interviews for this phenomenological study were designed in alignment with Walsh’s Family Resilience Framework and Lerner’s Five Cs Model. Further, the systematic phenomenological procedures of this study are in alignment with Clark Moustakas’ systematic steps as further outlined by John W. Creswell. The data will be collected from in-depth and multiple interviews, participant observations, visual media research with young people, music, and other forms of art (Creswell 2013: loc 1768-1770).

Participants will respond to the questions: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?” “What contexts or situations have influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?” However, since the literal wording of these questions are far too abstract for the South-East Asian context, the actual interview questions are addressed in concrete and brief format. Focus Group questions are based on a resilience-based Genogram interview and relationship resilience-based questions. Each family research session begins with a family focus group, continues with an interview with the parents, and closes with an interview with the children/youth. During the interview with the parents, the children will be asked to do some art work (drawings, craft productions, poetry) that will illustrate the following three themes: (1) illustrate your favorite scene in the lives of the following Bible figures: Daniel, Joseph, Moses, or Ruth; (2) illustrate one of your most favorite activities or interests in life; (3) illustrate your ideal family. In addition to these onsite research activities, it is planned to organize a 2-day youth gathering with the children of the research families. During those days, children will have an opportunity to express themselves in drama, role play, songs/music, and focus groups with the youth focus groups playing one of the major roles.

Daniel Shaw observed that focus groups are particularly valuable for verifying the quality or reliability of data based on observations or interviews. Observations, interviews, and focus groups provide for effective triangulation in research.
The focus group combines interviewing with observations of human interaction within the construct of a carefully chosen group of individuals who are knowledgeable about the research topic and understand its context. Research is carried out for the purpose of utilizing interrelationships among those in the group in order to maximize understanding. (in Elliston 2011:145, 146)

To further strengthen the validity, reliability, truth, and trustworthiness of the research, I am committed to integrate prolonged engagement, the phenomenological interpretation of referential adequacy materials (photographs, documents, and websites), member checks, and thick description. While the description of sights, sounds, scenes, and relationships comes natural in phenomenology, member checks need to be planned carefully. Through the work of reflexive research journaling, I intend to rewrite the families’ resilience stories and to invite research participants to dialog about the portrayal of given experiences (Erlandson et al.1993:30-33). At the end of every research session at the family sites in Burma, interviews and focus group recordings will be translated and transcribed. Data analysis will follow systematic procedures that move from the narrow units of analysis (significant statements) on to broader units (meaning units) and on to detailed descriptions that summarize the what and the how of the experience (Creswell 2013: loc 1773-1794). As seen in the pilot study section of this paper, the phenomena is described horizontally, structurally, and finally in its very essence.

**Pilot Case Study: Field Research with a Displaced Family in Myanmar**

This pilot case study is designed according to the principles and procedures of phenomenology and therefore does not follow the methodological guidelines for a typical qualitative case study. The purpose of this family case study is to first build relationships and rapport with one Karen lay ministry family who voluntarily left their registered refugee status in Thailand to serve as missionaries in rural communities of Myanmar. The parents are Seventh-day Adventist believers and are 42 and 43 years old. Their three children are 22, 20, and 16 years of age. They also adopted two children (8 and 1) from the village. In phenomenology, the inquirer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon. The chosen family fulfilled my “purposive sampling” criteria. I wanted the research participants to be of Karen ethnicity, missionally active in lay ministry, originate from a former Buddhist background, and ideally have children who are teens or young adults.
When we (the translator and I) were ready to cross the river, the father (ministry leader) of the family was already there. In fact, he had already contacted us by phone a few times before our arrival, simply to ensure that the crossing of the river would be safe. When we got off the boat on the other side, a handful of children from the leader’s school joyfully carried all the groceries and materials we had brought. As we climbed the slippery slope, the leader continued to help us until we reached a most beautiful but simple place located at the top of a hill. After a warm welcome by a group of women teachers and family members, and after being refreshed with lots of fresh fruit and water, I saw one of the poorest dormitories, kitchen, and school facilities I have ever seen in Southeast Asia. However, every single chair, curtain, and all the other ordinary objects were surrounded by loving gentle care and kindness from this extraordinary family. The lack of resources was compensated by resourceful creativity and the little church on the hill was equipped with almost nothing but loving, devoted people.

Our welcome description would not be complete without a mention of the armed military soldiers who were all over the place; however, the grace and charm of the people had already disarmed the soldier’s hearts long ago. We chose the church as a research venue and when we gathered on the floor, surrounded by markers, flip charts, and art material for the children, the soldiers snuck in and settled in the pews to get a glimpse of what was going on. I was surprised when the father mentioned that they welcome every opportunity to share about God, even with the soldiers. Although the soldiers soon disappeared, I was ready to learn what resilience means for this family and how they continue to live it in very difficult circumstances. In the following section I describe the experience of the “what,” and continue with the “how,” and finally close with the essence of the lived experience of a family’s resilience in displacement.

Textural Description

“I feel like God provided for me right at my feet.”
“What touches our heart is that one day, when they are grown up, we will send them to God’s feet.”

Both of us as parents grew up with grandparents who taught us to have a heart for religion as part of the Buddhist monastery life. They kept their faith, although military soldiers heavily abused them when they could not give in to so-called voluntary labor. We had no choice, but to flee to Thailand. When we lived with our children in the refugee camp, we met Jesus Christ. For the first time in our lives we felt joy and contentment. From
then on, we daily submitted ourselves to God, discussed with one another, prayed over issues, and did what God showed us to do. We joyfully serve all the people God sent our way. We also joyfully commit our children and the children attending our school to God’s care and guidance.

The daily routines in our spiritual life as a family and ministry family give us hope, purpose, and confidence. As a couple, we feel strongly connected. Together, we learned to read and write the Karen and Burmese language. As a husband, I am grateful for my dear wife because she is the major mentor, supporter, and encourager in my life. I appreciate her wisdom and spiritual insight and know when the time has come for an immediate agreement over major decisions in our lives. When my wife suggested for me to stop working and become the housekeeper, I realized I would finally have time to study God’s Word, to pray, and to fast. It was through that time of spiritual formation that I was able to stop taking drugs. As a couple, we begin our day with personal devotion. We also taught our children and students to follow our practices, and they do. After personal devotions, we meet as a whole ministry (students, teachers, family) community to worship God. (Voices of children saying: “Yes, what we most like about our family worship is that it is full of happiness, praise, and times of silence. We are co-leading community worship and our father encourages everyone to pray.”)

It is also part of our family routine to visit sick people, to pray for them, to teach them God’s Word, and to bring healing. After being separated for some time, we children love to reunite with the family. These are the best moments in our life. We are close, so it even works well that I (voice of one daughter) am raising an adopted child together with my mother. Even in our severe poverty, we stick together as a family. As parents, we do our best to model a good missionary example to our children, and we are seeing our children develop a Christ-like character and behavior. “They are doing God’s work in the same way as their parents.” For us as a family, church happens when we are leading worship as a team and “when we call and gather those who don’t know God to the feet of God.”

Imaginative Description

“I have seen that working with God always gives contentment and happiness, even though we don’t have anything.”

“I am from the trash and God lifted me up to this position.”

We arrived in Thailand’s refugee camp in 2000. Before we followed God’s call to return to Burma in 2011, our lives were transformed. We went through a lot of displacement and transition in those years. This
included one deportation out of Thailand, back to Myanmar, and into poverty. After our return to Thailand to the refugee camp (voice of the wife), my relatives rejected our company because we were so poor and brought shame to them. We lived on 30 cents per month, but God brought us in touch with an Adventist lay evangelist.

Later, we wanted to turn our backs to him because he rejected our religious background and idea of worship. Out of my confusion and desperate search for the true God, God sent me dreams. God revealed to me who He is, so I gave him my promise to only serve him. My husband and I were overwhelmed when we realized that God is our Creator and Redeemer. Our whole family stood up for Christianity against the will and arguments of our relatives. Because we knew that they could not give eternal life to us, we overcame our sadness caused by the family rejection. At that time, our general condition was still critical because my husband was not yet addiction-free.

Our lives were further complicated since both of us were illiterate, but all that changed when we learned that God blesses those who tithe. I started with a small business in the camp, giving tithe regularly. From that point on, our family always had enough food, and that circumstance restored our social standing among our extended family. During these hard times, we also had a growing desire to study the Bible for ourselves. We prayed and read, read and prayed, and soon we were able to read and teach others.

When we started our school and church plant in Burma, church leaders did not give us much support. At that time, we were offered the opportunity to resettle in Canada. However, in my prayer time, God told me four times that Canada was not the place for our family to be. When our school-age children heard about the possibility of moving, they said: “If you go there (Canada), what will we do, how will we live?” Since they were also reading God’s Word, their hearts were also impacted by biblical principles. We had taught them that when we truly rely on God and look for his leading, God will never leave us or forsake us.

When we saw the struggles in our children’s lives, we provided a school education for them that included practical exposure to spiritual life practices, because we wanted to prevent them from going through the same spiritual crises we had. God taught us that when we are poor and suffer with our people, our children get to see how God provides and cares for us. That was one reason why we embraced the opportunity to move to a new place because we were able to show our love to new neighbors and people around us.

During those times of economic crisis, our children went out and looked for work to help support the family, giving them the experience
and joy in doing God’s work. This is their own testimony: “We feel connected with God when we teach the children, worship God, and plan our future careers for medical missionary work. We as children deeply feel that we should have a relationship with God every day and at all times.”

Composite Description—the Essence

“Spirituality is the fertile ground for positive youth development”
(King and Clardy 2006:56).

“Spiritual life means to be human—to do God’s work means to become Human”
(research participant).

“Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon arising from ordinary human adaptive processes”
(Masten 2001:3).

I feel deeply privileged and honoured to have had the opportunity to meet this inspiring and wonderful Adventist family in Myanmar. I also want to express my gratitude for all the lessons about life, faith, and human development they have shared. First, I want to emphasize the observation that the family’s life experiences reveal a solid foundation in intergenerational resilience. The nature of their sincere spiritual response and commitment to spiritual life practices and God’s mission can possibly be traced back to their forefathers’ lived spirituality. Although they also developed a strong capacity for change and adaptation to severe life challenges like extreme poverty, social and cultural up-rootedness, and continuous cross-border displacement, the core characteristic of their resilience seems to be relational resilience.

The family’s commitment to live as reciprocating selves is a powerful testimony. Through the ground-breaking experience of being lifted up from the “trash” (a term used by the mother) to a position of being seen, loved, and cared for by a personal Redeemer and Creator transformed the lives of all the family members. The family’s proactive response to God’s love enabled them to become participants “in the ongoing creating, redeeming and perfecting work of the Trinity” (King 2016:215). Pamela King “proposes that living as reciprocating selves is God’s telos for humankind” (215).

Another powerful foundational characteristic of the nature of their resilience experience is their lived conscience towards an eschatological purpose in life. In the light of their vivid expectancy for the soon return of their Creator God, the family was able to discover meaning in their adversity. Their strong belief that crisis is manageable (a sense of coherence)
transformed adversity into an opportunity to introduce Burma’s children to Jesus. This also helped the parents develop a strong sense of leadership in their family and children’s ministry.

Through consistent and authentic spiritual life practices and daily rituals and routines, their biological, adopted, and foster children received an opportunity to grow in competence, confidence, caring, character, connection, and contribution to the greater good of the society. “Positive development occurs when the mutual influences between person and environment maintain or advance the well-being of the individual and context” (Lerner et al. 2008:55-74). Walsh describes this optimistic view with the words “master the possible, accept what we can’t change” (2002:132). The family powerfully described exactly this optimistic view in these words: “We do all we can, the rest we put to God’s hands.”

The family lives in the confidence that all their children will develop in the best possible way because they are engaged in spiritual practices and mission work. That is what the children confirmed throughout the interviews. I believe that the source of this strong belief and confidence derives from the family’s deep connectedness and consistent spiritual guidance they receive straight from God’s Word. At the end of this pilot study, the father of the family prayed that the family’s testimony might teach others about faith and mission. As a result of my interaction with the family, I propose that the father as the family and ministry leader understands human development and relational resilience as follows: Spiritual life means to be human—to do God’s work means to become human.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This paper was introduced by the assumption that missiologists might feel uneasy with the notion that the voices of poor and displaced minority people from the non-western world might be able to substantially contribute to innovative missionary paradigms with global implications. This phenomenological pilot study applied the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology and discovered that national research participants from the Karen State in Myanmar positively responded to this research approach. I can honestly say that the entire process was a confirming experience for all stakeholders involved. Throughout the interviews and focus group sessions, I noticed that the research participants felt very comfortable with sharing their life experiences in the ways proposed.

In summary, I evaluated hermeneutic phenomenology as a valid and reliable methodology for researching family resilience in the context of multidisciplinary missiological research. This is one major outcome of this project. However, God’s mission is a far larger enterprise than the
development of specific and unique research instruments. It is about people, their lives, and their transformative experiences with their Creator God. In this sense, I would argue that this experience-oriented research intervention was an ideal springboard into the lives of people whose lives give a testimony and a “thick description” of what it means that a mission theology of devotion is rooted in experience of an intimate relationship with the Trinitarian God and the restoration of God’s image in his followers. From their words and witness, I discerned a divine foundation for single-minded worship and obedience, which is the ultimate purpose of being human and becoming participants in Christ’s mission.

The ultimate outcome of this pilot study is that methodological validity and reliability was reflected in the overwhelming data that pointed to the preliminary thesis that the essence of resilience in displaced people is deeply rooted in a meaningful faith relationship and spiritual life practices. This powerful insight was gleaned from listening to the voices of the poor and a displaced minority people. This insight does have an impact on my current understanding of theology of mission, and it will have a modifying impact on the direction for my doctoral research.

The voices of the poor confirmed a common recommendation among scholars to combine the best of person-focused approaches with the best of variable-focused approaches in resilience studies. This could be especially beneficial for comparative studies in terms of religion and culture adherence. In other words, I am considering to slightly tweak my research topic and widen the scope towards a comparative religious study within the same environment and to specify the impact of comparative faith traditions on the human development context in displacement. Finally, my better understanding of the nature of family resilience awakened my curiosity for discovering the nature of resilience in people from both Christian and non-Christian faith traditions.

Appendix A

Interview Responses and Themes

What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?
What contexts, circumstances, or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentences/Statements</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We grew up with our grandparents and that was how we lived. We felt connected.</td>
<td>Connectedness through intergenerational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But I get to live so I have a heart for my religion</td>
<td>Sense of coherence through religious connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started receiving joy and feel content after baptism</td>
<td>Emotional Sharing of relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyful is the time when our family has to live separately, in faraway places, then we get to meet each other</td>
<td>Relational resilience, collaboration, mutual support and respect, love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm sad when I have to stay alone and I don't want to stay alone</td>
<td>Sense of belonging, expression of needs, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy when I come home</td>
<td>Emotional Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We siblings have to live apart and get to meet each other once in a while</td>
<td>Relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So we are talking, and are happy when we meet each others.</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church is when we call and gather those who don’t know God to the feet of God</td>
<td>Spiritual life (To be human), To do God’s work (To become human). Relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't go because then only one group of my family will get to live better (resettlement)</td>
<td>Sense of coherence, commitment, strong leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't feel good to leave my people and children, they have to be a part from God’s community</td>
<td>Relational and missional resilience Contribution to the greater good of the society (God’s kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The one who is close to me is my wife, she encourages me to do God's work</td>
<td>Strong marital partnership, marital encouragement that focuses on strengths and potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We committed all our children in God's hands</td>
<td>Strong leadership: nurture, protect, guide children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That they may have the same heart in us, two parents</td>
<td>Connectedness, relational resilience, purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I call her “the little one,” both as a child and grandchild</td>
<td>Varied family forms, cooperative parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being means people who have complete parents, protected by mother and father</td>
<td>Concept of strong leadership and spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we become parents, we are the guidance</td>
<td>Strong leadership, spiritual guidance through spiritual life practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have to be good example for children and teach them the way of God</td>
<td>Larger values, purpose, future goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have a heart to keep my children separately</td>
<td>Strong leadership, connectedness with mutual support and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if we have only salt or fish paste to eat but we will stay together</td>
<td>Active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When they live with others, their habits will be spoiled (bad influence)</td>
<td>Proactive stance: prevent problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, happiness is all over when children are staying together, in the family</td>
<td>Connectedness and emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To adapt to a new place is a good experience, to show our love with neighbours. It is a good experience to build up our fellowship with others</td>
<td>Capacity to change, rebound, adapt, sense of coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were reading together and if we can’t read, then we were asking each other</td>
<td>Equal partnership in mutual support in marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today, our children have the character and habits that we wanted for them, they have it by God’s grace.</td>
<td>Confidence through relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do God's work in the same heart with parents</td>
<td>Affiliative value: relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I know about medical work, medicine and how to heal patients, then I will use it in missionary work</td>
<td>Future goals and dreams, contribution to the greater good in society, “spark”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to draw pictures and include moral stories and God’s Word in it, to let people around us know</td>
<td>Future goals and dreams, contribution to the greater good in society, “spark”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should have relationship with God every day and every time when we have time, when we are in trouble or not in trouble</td>
<td>Character, Proactive stance, Larger values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm going for God. The money I got, I sent for the dormitory students to get to eat dry fish</td>
<td>Caring, contributing to the greater good of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is good to work for God, makes me feel strong and happy</td>
<td>Sense of coherence, crisis is meaningful, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few days ago, I let the children draw and write about what they want to be in future</td>
<td>Proactive stance in child education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm interested to teach children speaking Thai language</td>
<td>Proactive stance: Prepare for future challenges, prevent problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a chair lady sometimes in day time or evening time They always give me chance</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we let God use us, God will use us and guide us to do what we should do</td>
<td>Development of faith and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later I recalled that it weren’t the leaders who asked me to do the ministry but God</td>
<td>Faith development, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I don't do it, that would mean I don't keep my promise to God</td>
<td>Transformation: Learning and growth from adversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We pray that we will do whatever we can and the rest we cast into God's hand</td>
<td>Faith, confidence, sense of coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But I got a dream that God doesn't want me to go (resettlement), so I didn't go.</td>
<td>Faith, sense of coherence, confidence, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that God really works in our life, this is how I can feel that God doesn't pass me by but listens to our prayer</td>
<td>Confidence, trust, optimistic view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today we talked about what we have been through, for many others to understand God's work</td>
<td>Purpose: that family’s testimony will teach others about faith and mission. Contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I told them that if we rely on Him and look up to God, He is right beside us</td>
<td>Faith, optimistic view of life, emotional sharing, spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no worry for my children because God will lift them up</td>
<td>Confidence in children’s development because they are engaged in faith practice and mission work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am from the trash and God lifted me up to this position</td>
<td>Sense of coherence and relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am doing God’s work and got to stand in front of people and I can say that I became one of the leaders here, because I care</td>
<td>Confidence, caring, leadership development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So we do medical missionary work that everyone here receives happiness</td>
<td>Purpose, calling, contribution to the greater of the society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before we check the patients we will teach them from the Bible, learn God's Word together. Then we pray for them. We healed both, physically and spiritually</td>
<td>Commitment towards Jesus’ method of reaching out to the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are doing God's work and God provides for our family and gathers us together</td>
<td>Confidence, hope, collaboration, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because we are doing missionary work, our children obey what we are saying</td>
<td>Confidence in strong leadership and guidance of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are leading worship together</td>
<td>Varied family forms, co-operative leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes each and everyone takes turns to say prayers</td>
<td>Connected by mutual support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our family always has morning and evening worship</td>
<td>Spiritual practice and routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our family is visiting sick people together as a family</td>
<td>Family practice and routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I’m reading the Bible, the more I read, the more it makes me feel good and I feel like God is right beside me and talking with me</td>
<td>Spiritual connection, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before we do something, we hand all our plans to God. After saying a prayer, we will do the work. We are not simply doing it as our own desire</td>
<td>Spiritual commitment, Follow God’s guidance and will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we have problem in the dormitory, I prayed and I feel like God provided me right at my feet. This happens every year, since we started the school</td>
<td>Commitment for spiritual life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought in my heart that God is right at my side and He hears me when I call out to Him. That is how I feel</td>
<td>Spiritual connection and emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We train dormitory students to lead in worship, to pray, and how to study the Bible</td>
<td>Strong leadership, spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We have some of our dormitory students who are not baptized yet, but they can lead worship and pray. Envision spiritual growth and transformation of students

During worship service, I call out any one of them to practice praying. Envision spiritual growth, encouragement, spiritual guidance

Before we gather for worship with all students in the morning at the church, the two of us pray on our bed first. Commitment for spiritual discipline

We told our children and dormitory students to pray before bed and when they wake up, then we gather for worship here in the church. Commitment for spiritual practice and routine shared

What I like about our family worship is that it has happiness, giving praise to God, and solemn time. Connection via spiritual practice, relational resilience

We have silence during worship time and keep silence when we talk about God’s Word. Spiritual life

I have relationship with God in school. Relational resilience through family connectedness

I have seen that working with God always gives contentment and happiness even though we don’t have anything. Confidence, sense of coherence, emotional sharing, reciprocity, mutual empathy

It is me who knows that God is at my side. Spiritual confidence

I truly believe that God is with me. Trust and confidence

So when we are living in this world, we are poor and suffering. When we will be poor and suffer with our people, then the children will get to see the light and see God. Relational resilience

And they will grow up with God and get to know God. Confidence in relational resilience

Now I have a purpose, to help people with herbal treatment, as much as I can, to use what a pastor had shown me. I feel that I will be useful for them if I stay here. Purpose and relational resilience

When the children told us that they got to come here to learn and to hear about God's Word, it makes us feel so good, it makes us feel so pleased and happy. Emotional sharing, strong purpose and connectedness

We adopted children because we feel sympathy for them. Empathy, caring, character, contribution to the greater good of society

What touches our heart is that one day, when they are grown up, we will send them to God’s feet. Contribution, proactive stance, prevention

First the two of us will submit to prayer. When we have a problem, our hands and legs are ended. Commitment to maintain spiritual life and connectedness
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The most joyful for me is Saturday. I get to go to church and meet with friends and have relationship with God.</td>
<td>Commitment for spiritual life and reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here in Myanmar it is not easy to work because the military soldiers come to ask for porter or ask us to do voluntary labour, and ask for many other things to offer them</td>
<td>Adversity (oppression and exploitation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary labour (forced labour) is a must to do in the villages</td>
<td>Oppression and exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my past life, I was always spoiled (bad habits, addiction)</td>
<td>Addiction through multiple life adversities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is God’s arrangement that I met with the people I know from my village</td>
<td>Sense of coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We told each other that we can’t go back to Myanmar and we don’t have any money to give to offer tax or voluntary labour</td>
<td>Adversity in poverty and oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We came with only a pair of clothes and a small bag (one mosquito net and a piece of cloth for each child)</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My cousin chased me away from his house and did not let me live in his house</td>
<td>Social exclusion, marred identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to live at my friend's house for three days and my husband came back</td>
<td>Social and material providence in crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We only had 10 Baht (30 cents) per month available to spend</td>
<td>Extreme poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maela Camp has so many problem: drugs, fighting, punching Right in front of your eyes</td>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I saw one person beating up his father, I shivered and had tears, I never saw such a thing</td>
<td>Eye witness of abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My son’s mother already understood (the gospel) and told me that we are going to change our religion and believe in God</td>
<td>Clear, consistent message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the camp, I got to know that God is the creator (lay pastors)</td>
<td>Seek the true God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was still worshipping my own pagoda/god</td>
<td>Spiritual connection with Buddhist religion and tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of Christian evangelist: You shall not make idols and bow down to them. This really hurt me and I felt like someone hit my head with hammer</td>
<td>Experience of rejection of cultural identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He discriminated my religion</td>
<td>Experience of religious exclusion, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am totally confused. I don't know whether it is wrong for me if I worship God, because my parents and grandparents didn't do it for us before.</td>
<td>Relational (intergenerational faith resilience) versus seeking truth, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to know whether worshipping the monks or worshipping God is correct.</td>
<td>Searching for truth, confusion. Emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Emotional and Spiritual Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't figure it out anymore</td>
<td>Confusion in religious rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know how to pray in the Christian way</td>
<td>Searching for spiritual and relational identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prayed: Father in Heaven, reveal to me Buddha or Jesus Christ is my creator and redeemer, who is the true God? Reveal it to me and I will follow it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That was my promise</td>
<td>Committed and devoted through intergenerational resilience, emotional sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the prayer, I had a dream (for 11 hours). Dream of an earthquake and people dying all around me. Saw a group of people on a mountain top. They have a song they sang, looking up to Jesus. I went to them. I belonged to them, not to the dead people around me.</td>
<td>Spiritual guidance through dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to be baptized because God reveals himself and let me see the truth</td>
<td>Confidence, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't read even a word. We two were reading together and when we saw complicated words that we couldn’t read; we just skipped it and read further.</td>
<td>Strong co-partnership and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dreamed another dream again. I dreamed that I saw Jesus. While I was crying it seemed that someone wiped my tears, all the sorrow was completely gone.</td>
<td>Spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then we as husband and wife decided to get baptized together</td>
<td>Relational confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy because I saw God as the truth since He revealed himself in my dreams two times</td>
<td>Emotional sharing, joy in spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try me with tithe and see if I pour down blessing or not</td>
<td>Faith, creative resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to see if God keeps His promise or not</td>
<td>Testing relationality, mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatever my hands did, I got to eat (earn profit)</td>
<td>Confidence in overcoming odds, trust and hope in relationship and future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before we were so poor that our uncle and auntie didn’t see us as relatives. But later our neighbours look up to us.</td>
<td>Marred identity, social exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pray to see (to have a vision) which of the two religions is truth, and who of the two Gods can redeem us. Now I can see, Jesus revealed it to me. I am going to be baptized because God reveals and let me see the truth.</td>
<td>Conversion through spiritual guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After baptism, my husband could still not quit drugs. I told him not to go for work but to stay at home, to look after the children</td>
<td>Creative resourcefulness, adapt to fit challenges, collaborative problem solving, co-parental relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and to do the cooking and washing—and I am doing business  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I gave him time to study the Bible. One hour in the morning, and one hour in the evening. He did it. (through that practice, he could stop with any type of addiction)</th>
<th>Creative resourcefulness, adapt to fit challenges, collaborative problem solving, co-parental relationship.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We had enough money but we didn’t have contentment</td>
<td>Character, integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...even if my husband does God’s work, and I am doing business, I will surely sink into this earth’s gravity. But when I follow God’s way I receive happiness, more than by doing business. Now, I have more joy.</td>
<td>Emotional sharing, self reflection, greater values and purpose in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no one to cheat on me, and I am content and have joy in God because we are doing missionary work.</td>
<td>Relational resilience and faithful obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are blessed by God through giving us obedient children.</td>
<td>Love for obedient submission, nurture and guidance of children towards discipleship. Emotional sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is only our family and no other family who baptized at the same time with us, to stand up for God like us.</td>
<td>Confidence and questioning community of believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After we knew God, the two of us, husband and wife, we didn’t know how to pray at night-time. So we prayed in our own way</td>
<td>Relational resilience in spiritual life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The story of Noah touched my heart, and if I don’t accept God, I will be destroyed.</td>
<td>Conversion, transformation (learning and growth from adversity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So my son’s mother said that from now on, she will believe in God. “If believe, then let’s believe.” With this statement, he shows his agreement with his wife’s idea.</td>
<td>Pro-active decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She told me, because of the dream she will get baptized. And I said, “If have to baptize, let’s get baptized.” Since then, we discussed, prayed, and handed all to God.</td>
<td>Proactive decision-making, relational resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If God wants us to accept Him, we will believe in God. We prayed about it.</td>
<td>Obedience and envision new possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of us can read, and we want to read the Bible at night time. I learned Karen first, and tried to learn Burmese bit by bit. Every night, the two of us prayed and read together.</td>
<td>Developing competence through active initiative and perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was sure that God asked me to do His work. I said that I don’t have education. I can’t read, so I can’t do gospel work.</td>
<td>Process of developing capacity for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From then on, my son’s mother encouraged me. I gained courage and started doing it.</td>
<td>Encouragement, mutual support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do it, without getting a stipend, because God is leading me until I become</td>
<td>Active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
much better. But I can work even if I don’t receive a stipend.

I came here (place of ministry), and met with these children. I didn’t want them to fall in the situation of my past life. I have a heart for the children and the place we set up here. We don’t give them only the physical- and school education, but spiritual and religious education, so that they don’t get spoiled, like I was in my past. (Spoiled: drug and alcohol addiction).


Friends and leaders tell us to do the missionary work, they told us to build the building.

Encouragement and (limited) support from church community and leaders

Yes, we do what we can but we don’t have support for what we need

Master the possible, accept what cannot be changed

When the church leaders don’t support us, for how long can I look after it? What will I do when I used all we have? It will be a shame for others.

Cultural perspective of group/community shame

Many problems of this kind. Sometimes my heart is so completely down.

Acknowledge to be human, emotional sharing

I pray to God: If I can’t stand on my own feet for the future, it will be a shame for others, and will badly reflect on my church’s reputation

Mobilize spiritual and social support

We get only rice support. But we have to buy all cooking oil, fish paste, yellow beans, chilly, and salt. So my daughter goes to work.

Master the possible, accept what cannot be changed, mobilize economic support

Now, she (daughter) adopted a little girl. So she goes to get money for milk. She told me: “Daddy, I worship anytime here, and I got to support your dormitory students.”

Mobilize support, relational resilience, build financial security, mutual support in the family

The children of our school said: “If you go there (resettlement country), what will we do, how will we live?” They have learned education for physical life and they have heard about God’s Word, it lightens their heart. They said, if they go to the government school, they will not get to hear God’s Word.

Sense of coherence

Through purpose, crisis as meaningful and manageable challenge
1. Making meaning of adversity
   o Affiliative value: resilience as relationally based
   o Family life cycle orientation: normalize, contextualize adversity and distress
   o Sense of coherence: crisis as meaningful, comprehensible, manageable challenge
   o Appraisal of crisis, distress, and recovery: Facilitative vs. constraining beliefs

2. Positive outlook
   o Hope, optimistic view; confidence in overcoming odds
   o Courage and encouragement; focus on strengths and potential
   o Active initiative and perseverance (can-do spirit)
   o Master the possible; accept what cannot be changed

3. Transcendence and spirituality
   o Larger values, purpose; future goals and dreams
   o Spirituality: faith, communion, rituals
   o Inspiration: envision, new possibilities; creativity
   o Transformation: learning and growth from adversity

Organizational Patterns

4. Flexibility
   o Capacity to change; rebound, reorganize, adapt to fit challenges over time
   o Counterbalanced by stability: continuity, dependability through disruption

5. Connectedness
   o Mutual support, collaboration, and commitment
   o Respect individual needs, differences, and boundaries
   o Strong leadership: nurture, protect, guide children and vulnerable family members
   o Varied family forms: cooperative parenting/care giving teams
   o Couple/co-parental relationship: equal partners
   o Seek reconnection, reconciliation of troubled relationships

6. Social and Economic resources
   o Mobilize extended kin and social support; models and mentors
   o Build community networks
   o Build financial security; balance work-family strains

Communication Processes

7. Clarity
   o Clear, consistent messages (word and actions)
   o Clarify ambiguous information: truth seeking and truth speaking

8. Open emotional sharing
   o Share range of feelings (joy and pain; hopes and fears)
   o Mutual empathy; tolerance for differences
   o Responsibility for own feelings, behavior; avoid blaming
   o Pleasurable interactions; humor

9. Collaborative problem solving
   o Creative brainstorming; resourcefulness
   o Shared decision making and conflict resolution; negotiation, fairness, reciprocity
   o Focus on goals; take concrete steps; build on success; learn from failure
   o Proactive stance: Prevent problems; avert crises; prepare for future challenges

10. Five Cs Model of PVD
    o Competence
Confidence
Connection
Character
Caring
All five Cs lead to Contribution to the greater good of society

Appendix B

Research Questions for Family Focus Group,
Interview with Parents, Youth, and Children

Research Topic: Family Resilience in Displacement

Main Research Questions

1. What is the essential nature of family resilience for displaced lay ministry families in Myanmar?
2. How did these families experience family resilience? Under what circumstances? In what context?

Sub-Questions

1. How did the family adapt to circumstances of displacement and adversity?
2. What was the process of restoring displacement towards a stable functional state?
3. What family roles and routines in daily life were helpful?
4. What family beliefs and religious/spiritual practices are helpful in dealing with stressful situations?
5. What is the nature of religious engagement and experience of spirituality? What is it like for the parents? What is it like for the children/youth?
6. How does the proximity of parent-child relationship and spiritual role models have an impact on positive youth development?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Focus Group: Resilience-based Genogram-Interview and Timeline

Demographic Questions

1. Please help us draw a Genogram, something like a family tree. You are the experts on your family relationships. It is important for you to build. The more you can teach your children about the long line of people they come from, the more family medicine you can give them for their life.
3. Who lives in your household? Who belongs to your family? Name, age, gender. How long, recent changes? Indicate how all are related.
4. Who else is important and belongs to your family? Auntes, uncles, godparents, friends?
Genogram Demographics

Mom and Dad’s Family or Origin

1. When and where were your grandparents born?
2. What are their names?
3. Are they still alive? Where are they living now?
4. If deceased, when did they die, at what age, and what was the cause?
5. What kind of work do or did they do?
6. Did they remain together? Were they separated or divorced, what were their ages?
7. What was their ethnic and religious background?
8. How many children did they have?

Relationship Resilience-Based Questions

1. As we look at the folks who are drawn here, who would you say you are real close with? What do you value or appreciate most in that relationship?
2. Who is looked up to as a role model in the family?
3. Who has been a source of inspiration?
4. Can you share a story about that person and the strengths you admire?
5. Who can you turn to in times of trouble for support? For emotional support? Any person from the community?
7. Who contributes to joy in your life? Can you recall a particular fun memory with any family members in your Genogram so far?

Communication, Family Life, Practices

1. Do you as a family remember any special event that made you all very happy and joyful and hopeful as a family? What did this moment mean for you? Can you share positive feelings, appreciation, humor, and fun to find relief in difficult situations?
2. When you have sad feelings, anger, or fear, do you share these feelings with one another?
3. Do you remember a very sad event, when you shared your true feelings about it, and then felt stronger as a family?
4. What family practices were especially helpful for your dealing with stressful situations? Like devotion time together? Mealtimes together? Prayer times together? Being in church? Serving others together?
5. How were family routines in your family life affected when you went into transition?
6. Can you share an experience when you felt closest with God as a family?
7. What does wellbeing of a family mean for you?

Individual Interview Questions with Parents

1. Grand Tour: What are the stages/steps of your displacement? When did displacement happen? How did you as a family experience this?
2. How did you experience your conversion? What were life circumstances and what did conversion mean to you?
3. How did conversion affect your life? Your family? Your role in the community?
4. What did leaving the camp mean for you? What changes in life did you experience as a family?
5. How do you experience your personal faith?
6. What spiritual practices are most important for you and your family? Prayer, meditation, nature, creativity, art, music? What helps you to feel close to God? What does this mean for you?
7. What is your role in church and in ministry?
8. Would you say that you can deal with a crisis as a family together rather than alone?
9. What helped you most to cope well with stress? What helps you most to face difficulties?
10. Parenting style: Chores at home, time for free play, contact with children who are in camp school, giving security and protection, to be clear and consistent in what we do and say, express opinions?
11. What is it like for you to be a parent?

Youth Interview Questions

1. Are there special families you see in church you like very much, or you would like to belong to? How do you feel in your family in comparison?
2. How do you make family decisions, chores in household, how to spend money?
3. Do you have special family rules? Can you give one example?
4. When you are older, would you also like to live and serve like your parents? If yes, why?
5. What do you remember best about your life in the camp? What do you remember from transitions and what do they mean for you today? What are good memories? What events and situations? And stories in the camp?
6. What do you enjoy most when you are together with your friends?
7. Do you have a role in your church youth group?
8. Are there leaders in your church or people you really like? Do you want to become like them?
9. Who encourages you to pray, to read the Bible? Does the church help you with that?
10. Did you ever have any event or moment when you felt very close to God?
11. Does feeling close to God make you wish to do something for others? To help others? In what types of community service are you involved? Can you describe them?
12. How is school for you? In class, do you like working with numbers or with languages?
13. What is your favorite subject?
14. What do you really like to do? What do you feel very attracted to? Art, literature, music, sports?
15. What does family worship time mean for you?
16. What of all your day-to-day activities do you enjoy most?
17. Are you sometimes separated as a family and what is it like?
18. When you think about the Bible stories of Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Ruth … Which one do you like most? What do you like most about this story? Can you draw a picture of what you like most? What specific scene especially appeals to you?
19. What activity in life do you like most? Can you illustrate that?
20. Can you illustrate your most ideal family? (Drawing, craft work)

Note: The above questions include a broad range and variety of topics. Depending on the research context, questions should be carefully chosen. The most important task is to find access to the interviewee, so that responses will contribute to answering the first two main questions.

Works Cited


Regine Rimarzik (Masters in Global Leadership, Fuller University) has 16 years of intercultural experience in South East Asia. Regine ministers with a passion for ethnic minority people who suffer from abuse, trauma, and addiction in social dislocation. With residency in Thailand, she currently works with Covenant Consult, an Adventist International Development Consultancy. Regine’s role is to strengthen organizations and individuals to adequately respond to the recovery needs of displaced people.