Title:

A Treasured History: Listening to and Learning from Global Workers' Stories of Resilience

Abstract:

Too often in Christian circles, the "missionary as superhero" myth has been perpetuated; this has led to an improper and incomplete understanding of resilience and what it means to be a resilient missionary. Differentiating resilience from grit, the Resilient Global Worker Study (RGWS) sought to understand missionaries' perspectives on their own resilience. This dissertation, an analysis of the data-set resulting from the Written Interview portion of the RGWS (n=247), seeks to answer this question: How do missionaries express their experience of the journey toward greater resilience? Using a Narrative Inquiry model, it examines the themes that missionaries use when they talk about resilience. It also seeks to discover underlying demographic patterns with a bearing on missionary resilience and how it might be increased. It also looks at those counter-narratives present in these stories. Discussion is presented in each content chapter detailing what might be gleaned from these narratives for those who care about and for missionaries. Above all, this dissertation aims to listen to, learn from, and amplify the voices of missionaries.

A Treasured History:

Listening to and Learning from Global Workers' Stories of Resilience.

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March 2023

Dissertation

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Intercultural Studies

Asbury Theological Seminary

March 2023

Dr. Stephen Offutt, Mentor

Dr. Steve Ybarrola, Reader

Acknowledgments:

This work would not have been possible without the support of an entire personal and professional community, who have upheld and encouraged me through my own resilience journey. Particular thanks to Dr. Steve Offutt, whose friendship and guidance made this dissertation far better than it could have been without his input. Thanks also to Dr. Steve Ybarrola, who has always believed in my capacity and encouraged me to reach for it. As for the staff of the ARP, particularly Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau and Patti Walker: I wouldn't be here without you all.

Thanks do not seem enough for the family and friends who have walked alongside me in this long process. My sister, Kati Hultman-Schlabach has been my biggest cheerleader. My father, Ron Hultman, has been a lifelong example of stick-to-itiveness. My mother, Jan Hultman, in addition to being utterly convinced that I could do this even when I was not, carefully and lovingly proofread to perfection. To the Squad: I love you guys, and I am so grateful God brought us together in this program in this season. The amazing and zany Patrick Whiteman suffered through many dinner-time conversations about resilience and also buoyed me up with love and silliness and conversations about scientific impossibilities. Packi, you are my favorite kid!

Geoff Whiteman, I am so glad that you said, "yes" to making me part of the team and that you trusted me to nurture and grow the Resilient Global Worker Study into this new stage. Thank you for being my partner in so many ways.

Finally, I thank all the global workers who shared their stories with us. I cannot count the number of times I have wept in gratitude that I get to listen to you and learn from you. Your stories are worth hearing, and your resilience is beautiful.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

"*My relationship with God has shifted away from 'certainty' to 'security' and it's much more safe here. It isn't dependent on external dogma, but on internal processes and spirituality that sustains me. And it is sourced in Him. I am much more patient with people; much less judgmental and willing to acknowledge that each person is on a journey. I have more optimism with people, knowing there is a path to resilience that expresses deep spirituality and is authentic. I view myself with much more grace.*"

—North American serving in Melanesia for 18 years. (Q213)[1]

Flowing straight back to Pentecost, the Christian church has sent out members on a special Mission—the sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ across cultural barriers.[2] While this work has taken different forms, a key component of the mission

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[1] Where missionaries are quoted, an anonymized version of their demographic information and the quote number (Q) the quote is drawn from will be listed. Quotes from missionaries will also be italicized to set them off from other types of quotes.

[2] Please note: this dissertation makes extensive use of footnotes. Some are explanatory footnotes which have been placed in this form in order to not interrupt flow. Some are footnotes attributing authorship. Some footnotes give anonymized descriptions of the missionary a specific quote came from.

endeavor has always been the service of long-term missionaries.[3] These individuals,

groups, or families hold a special place in Mission. They are the ones who "go," who

commit to spending long periods of their lives away from home in order to

communicate the gospel effectively and see the Light of Christ spread in another

culture.

Within Christian circles, this special task of spreading the good news across

cultures has been layered with particular attitudes and expectations—especially that

long-term missionary work is the highest calling of ministry, reserved for Heroes of the

Faith. The Super Missionaries of the past would leave home never to return. Fruitful or

frustrated, they would live and die on foreign soil. Either way, they would persevere

with perfect trust and obedience. From the outside, when we studied missionary

heroes, we have focused on their fortitude, their perseverance, their active prayer lives,

and their great victories for the Faith.[4]

There is no doubt that those who have answered this calling have taken up a

unique work for the sake of the gospel. However, when we talk about missionaries as

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[3] A note on terminology: There are some countries where being known as a "missionary" is either dangerous or damaging to the work a missionary is trying to do. Therefore, in public statements/comments about missionaries, I generally use the term "global worker." This sometimes leads to questions about whether we are discussing people who are living outside their passport country for other reasons, such as government work, military service, or professional work that requires one to live cross culturally. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use the term "missionary" for the sake of disambiguation, unless quoting a missionary who uses a different term, like "worker" or "CCW."

[4] See, for example, the Urbana Student Missions Conference list of "21 Missionaries You Should Know," which does mention the martyrdom of some missionaries, but otherwise expresses even their struggles as heroic and does not mention their setbacks and difficulties. This is a modern echo of the kinds of missionary biographies written in the late 19th century to inspire children, described in Julie Anne McColl's dissertation *Imagining the Missionary Hero: Juvenile Missionary Biographies, c. 1870-1917.*

Jack Voelkel, "21 Missionaries You Should Know," *Intervarsity: Urbana Student Missions Conference,* posted July 16, 2014, accessed August 28, 2020, https://urbana.org/blog/21-missionaries-you-should-know.

though they are super-human in order to gain inspiration, we are not really—or at least

not fully—honest. Battles with mental illness, traumatic loss, discouragement, physical

infirmity, entanglements and/or battles with colonialism, or disagreements with other

missionaries or local Christian leadership are often overlooked. The mythologizing of

Mission work and of missionaries is damaging[5] because it maintains the expectation

that missionaries today should be superheroes as well: True missionaries, if they are

truly called and truly have faith, can overcome any obstacle with a combination of

faithful prayer and grit...**Except sometimes they can't.**

Though missionaries today contend with a different set of personal and public

factors than previous generations faced, there are still commonalities of experience.

Even in this interconnected, urbanized, mobile world, long-term missionaries face

culture shock, trauma, conflict, illness, disappointment, and grief.[6] In the face of these

inevitable and insurmountable challenges, different missionaries experience different

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[5] See, for example, the story of John Allen Chau and the response it evoked in the missionary community, described in their own words in *The New York Times*: Lela Moore, "'I've Thought a Lot About Whether I Did Good or Evil': Missionaries on the Death of John Allen Chau," *The New York Times,* November 30, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/30/reader-center/john-allen-chau-missionaries.html

[6] For example, when asked in the Resilient Missionary Study what resources they desired most, "Resources on Dealing with Grief, Loss, and Disappointment" was the top response. (This result was not part of the published preliminary findings.)

outcomes.[7] A grievous truth is that many missionaries come out of cross-cultural

service profoundly changed for the worse: Many feel defeated and lost as they leave

the field earlier than they had planned. Others stick out their first term and then come

home, battered and bruised. Others remain physically present but emotionally and

spiritually absent, grinding out the years until they can retire and come "home." Some

end up leaving not only Mission work but also the Faith that inspired them to cross

cultures in the first place.

But there is a group of missionaries who have a different story. They are not

invulnerable adventurers who are never touched by adversity. On the contrary—just as

frequently as those who are changed for the worse, they have stories of trauma, pain,

and loss. However, they experience this brokenness as a step along the way and not

as the end destination. Whether they stay in the field or not, they come out on the

other side of their experiences better, stronger, and with a deeper faith than they had

before. They are crushed, but they bounce back. They are resilient.[8]

What makes the difference? Why do some missionaries thrive, while others fail

to even survive? Though he had been thinking about this issue for many years, Geoff

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[7] Note: It is surprisingly difficult to find statistics on missionary attrition more recent than the ReMap II and publications based on ReMap II. Several smaller studies examine particular denominations or organizations or national groups (for example, see Reuben Langat's dissertation "Dropping Out: An Examination of Missionary Attrition Phenomena within the Africa Gospel Church.").

The most recent academically rigorous work I have been able to find on missionary attrition, Andrea Sears' "Top Reasons for Missionary Attrition," done in the same year as the Resilient Global Worker Study, is one of the few exceptions. Her study of 739 former missionaries found a variety of reasons that paralleled those mentioned here. (See Chapter 8 for further mention of Sears' work.)

Andrea Sears, "Top Reasons for Missionary Attrition" (Missio Nexus Mission Leaders Conference, Orlando, FL, September 29, 2022).

[8] See Geoff Whiteman, "How Missionaries Become Resilient," ThM Thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2018.

Whiteman, then a ThM student at Asbury Theological Seminary, began his intensive search for the answer in 2016. Over the course of the next two years, he would scour the available resources, create a model of missionary resilience, and then launch mixed-methods research in an attempt to find the answer. His Resilient Missionary Study (RMS) is the largest, most diverse, most comprehensive investigation to date into the resilience of missionaries.[9]

Throughout the creation and launch of the Resilient Missionary Study, as his wife I was inspired both by Geoff's work and the response of missionaries. My first official involvement began in the summer of 2018, when I began work on the research team, assisting with qualitative analysis. I can say without exaggeration that this was a life-changing experience. Together with another research assistant, I had the privilege of reading some of the stories that missionaries shared about their own journeys into resilience. Reading what they had to say inspired me, encouraged me, and made me, I believe, a more resilient person myself.

In 2019, while on short-term assignment in Europe, Geoff and I dreamed about the next steps for the Resilient Missionary Study. With the assistance of the research team, he had analyzed the initial survey information, including the demographic and psychographic data and the single open-ended question which was part of this portion

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[9] In most public-facing places, to make the research more accessible to people in restricted access countries, this is referred to as the Resilient Global Worker Study (RGWS).

Geoff Whiteman, et al., "How Do Missionaries Become Resilient?: Preliminary Findings from the Resilient Missionary Study," in *Relentless Love: Living Out Integral Mission to Combat Poverty, Injustice, and Conflict,* ed. Graham Joseph Hill, (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2020).

Whiteman, et al., "Preliminary Findings" goes into detail as to the size and scope of this research. This sample size of 892 participants included participants from 41 passport countries and working in 148 countries.

Whiteman, et al, "Preliminary Findings," 67-68.

of the study. Because of a lack of money and time, however, the analysis of the

approximately 600 pages of interview questions had been cut short—in fact, only a

third of the interviews had even been coded by the research team. Over the course of

several weeks, I realized how much I wanted to be a part of this work—not only

because it had already changed my life, but also because I believed that listening to,

learning from, and amplifying the stories of resilient missionaries could be a genuine

contribution to the Mission work of the entire Christian church.

Therefore, I decided to use the Written Interviews of the Resilient Missionary

Study as a secondary data set to answer this question: **How do missionaries express**

their experience of the journey toward greater resilience? How can understanding

their stories contribute to the continued growth in resilience for missionaries? How can

listening to missionaries' voices help those of us who train, lead, and care for them to

contribute to their journeys toward resilience?

This dissertation is an effort to answer this primary question in pursuit of the

others—to understand what missionaries say about their experiences for the good of

missionaries and the entire Mission endeavor. It is based on missonaries' own words,

on the stories they tell in response to three sets of questions about their growth in

resilience. In it, I have utilized Narrative Inquiry (see Chapter 3) to look at these stories

through a variety of lenses which allow a rich and nuanced understanding of the

themes missionaries use and of the way demographic differences affect expression of

the resilience journey. Throughout this dissertation, I have used illustrative quotes from

missionaries because I want others to experience the treasure I have seen in their

words.

There is great value in looking deeply at the Written Interviews of the Resilient Missionary Study. As will be described more fully in the next chapter, the vast majority of existing literature on or related to missionary resilience has some serious gaps. Psychological literature misses the specific Christian framework that is such an important part of a missionary's world. Literature on parallel populations either misses the mark in this same way or misses the cross-cultural component. Member care literature either defines resilience incorrectly as grit, briefly brushes past resilience, or focuses on other topics. Few research projects relating directly to missionary resilience have been done, and even most of these have significant short-comings.

The Resilient Missionary Study has already yielded invaluable insights into both what missionaries can do to increase/leverage their resilience and into what organizations can do to support them.[10] However, the analysis of the Written Interview is incomplete and lacked a theoretical framework. This data set has been like a gem mine with one shaft—this dissertation has revealed more treasure, more of the precious jewels found in missionaries' stories of their growth in resilience. What I have found in this dissertation has already revolutionized how I do missionary care and training, and I believe (particularly given the response to what has been shared with the missionary community so far) that it has the potential to do the same for many others who care about missionaries and want to see them thrive in the field and in life.

This dissertation will begin with an extensive review of the literature currently available related to this topic. I have taken a look at psychological literature, literature

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[10] See Geoff and Kristina Whiteman. "Supporting Today's Global Workers Toward Missional Resilience." *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* 58, Is. 2 (April-June 2022). Accessed December 16, 2022. https:// missionexus.org/supporting-todays-global-workers-toward-missional-resilience/

regarding some parallel populations, missionary care literature, and the very little literature that exists on missionary resilience. I have also described what has and has not happened so far with this data set. After the literature review, I then outline my methodology, including a description of Narrative Inquiry. Following the methodology are six content chapters, in which I utilize the lenses of Narrative Inquiry to outline the major themes used by missionaries to describe the journey toward greater resilience and offer a demographic analysis of those themes. I end this dissertation with a final discussion of the impact I see this research having—what do we do with what we now know about missionary resilience?

The endeavor of the long-term missionary is at the very heart of the Christian movement. Too little is known about the path missionaries can take and about the things we who walk beside them can do to help them to become more resilient. This dissertation takes advantage of a unique opportunity—to listen to, learn from, and amplify the invaluable stories of missionaries. By understanding their words, I believe that we can find a new definition of what it means to be resilient. Those who cross cultures in service to the gospel do not have to be victims of the stress and trauma they face, nor do they have to feel pressure to be Missionary Heroes who simply keep quiet and carry on. Instead, missionaries' pain and brokenness can be acknowledged and can become an opportunity—to grow, to change, to come back stronger and better than before—to be resilient. And those of us who care for and about them can learn from these stories, not just how to help missionaries, but how to become more resilient ourselves. All this and more can be found when we ask this question: **How do missionaries express their experience of the journey toward greater resilience?**

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are general principles which apply to missionary resilience that can be found throughout psychological literature, literature studying adjacent populations, missionary care literature, and the few studies which have actually been done in missionary resilience. However, each of these areas is either too broad or misses out on some vital aspect of missionaries' experiences of resiliency. Given the paucity of research into missionary resilience and the limited analysis thus far of this data set, I believe that this further examination is absolutely vital to the field of member care, of cross-cultural missions, and of Christian Mission.

In examining the existing literature relating to missionary resilience, several areas of scholarship should be explored.   When it comes to general literature, many books

and studies relate generally to resilience. Books as varied as Brown's *Rising Strong: How the Ability to Reset Transforms the Way We Life, Love, Parent, and Lead*; McMinn's *The Science of Virtue: Why Positive Psychology Matters to the Church;* and Edwards' *A Tale of Three Kings: A Study in Brokenness* can be consulted. Indeed, any book or study on psychological or spiritual growth or health that relates to the Resilience Cycle[11]—of movement toward being a "celebrant who is helping others heal"[12] —is helpful in thinking about the more narrow topic of missionary resilience.

Psychology and Resilience

A broader look at research into resilience is helpful in understanding missionary resilience. Research in the type of psycho-social resilience that is the focus of this proposal began in the early 1970s. Perhaps its most influential researcher is Emmy Werner, whose 30-year longitudinal work studied the experiences of poor children in Kauai, Hawaii, as they grew up. Though many were caught up in cycles of poverty, mental illness, and abuse, some who came from extremely challenging backgrounds were able to go on to lead productive adult lives; Werner sought to understand why these people were "resilient."[13] In the decades since then, much research has been

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[11] See Geoff Whiteman, "Missiology of Public Life as Resiliency," *Working Papers of The American Society of Missiology, Vol. 4* (Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press. July 2, 2017), accessed October 8, 2020, https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1085&context=firstfruitspapers.

[12] Whiteman, "Missiology of Public Life as Resiliency," 77-81.
See **Chapter 4** for a fuller discussion of the Resilience Cycle.

[13] Emmy Werner, *The Children of Kauai: a Longitudinal Study from the Prenatal Period to Age Ten* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Honolulu University of Hawaii Press, 1971).

done in the area of childhood and protective factors,[14] with additional studies in adult

resilience beginning in the 1980s[15] and examinations of resilience in communities

currently emerging at the growing edge of research.[16]

      Resilience literature from the psychological community offers several helpful

components for understanding missionary resilience. First of all, a helpful definition of

resilience is given: **People experience adversity, which they respond to using**

positive adaptations. This response leads to a return to the previous level of

functioning, or even to gains in function.[17] The adversity faced is sometimes acute

(as in a traumatic event) and sometimes chronic (as in a set of long-term/persistent

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[14] See, for example, Sam Goldstein and Robert Brooks, eds., *Handbook of Resilience In Children, 2nd ed.* (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, 2013)*,* in which Werner is a contributing author.

[15] See Aaron Antonovsky, *Unraveling the Mystery of Health* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1987)*.*

[16] See, for example: Chapter 9: "Community Resilience Assessment—Meeting the Challenge—the Development of the Conjoint Community Resiliency Assessment," in *Resiliency: Enhancing Coping with Crisis and Terrorism: Nato Science for Peace and Security, Series E: Human and Societal Dynamics,* eds. Dean Ajdukovic, Shaun Kimhi, and Mooli Lahad (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2015).

See also: Fran Noriss, Susan Stevens, Betty Pfefferbaum, Karen Wyche, and Rose Pfefferbaum, "Community Resilience as Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41 (2008): 127-150.

See also Andrew Zolli and Ann Marie Healy, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

See also Steven Southwick and Dennis Charney, *Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 279.

[17] Frederich Flach, *Resilience: Discovering a New Strength at Times of Stress* (New York: Fawcette Columbine, 1988), xiv; David Fletcher and Mustafa Sarkar, "Psychological Resilience: A Review and Critique of Definitions, Concepts, and Theory," *European Psychologist* 18, vol 1(2013): 13; Thomas Skovholt and Michelle Trotter-Mathison, *The Resilient Practitioner: Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Prevention and Self-Care Strategies for the Helping Professions* (New York: Routledge, 2016): 125-126; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 8.

stressors).[18] Whether it is sudden and severe, long and unrelenting, or some

combination, this is adversity which is genuinely disruptive to an individual's "normal"

—to some degree, it breaks their world.[19]

It is important to recognize that resilience has **both protective and responsive**

aspects.[20] This means that there are some experiences or attributes which allow

certain people either to continue in the face of adversity or to experience adversity with

less severe effects. An example of a protective factor would be "hardiness," which is

often connected to (and sometimes mistaken for) the larger concept of resilience.

Hardiness is perhaps best defined as the ability to persevere through difficult

circumstances—as grit. An increase in hardiness allows an individual to, over time,

handle more adversity than they had previously been able to handle; it can properly be

understood as an attribute of resilience.[21] However, because resilience is more than

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[18] Michael Rutter, "Resilience in the Face of Adversity," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 14 (1985): 608; Margaret Hagland, et al, "Psychobiological Mechanisms of Resilience: Relevance to Prevention and Treatment of Stress-Related Psychopathology," *Development and Psychopathology* 10, no. 3 (June 2007): 889; Fletcher and Sarkar, "Psychological Resilience," 12,14; Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, *Resilient Practitioner*, 126; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 15.

[19] Flach, *Resilience*, 14.
Note: The idea of "brokenness" comes up multiple times throughout this dissertation. When I use this term, or the term "breaking adversity," it is to refer to this definition–brokenness is a disruption in either personal or professional functioning; brokenness is caused by adversity.

[20]As far as I know, this particular terminology is my own, although the following authors distinctly describe these two categories: Rutter, "Resilience," 600, 605, 608; Zolli and Healy, *Resilience*, 9-13, 23, 59; Fletcher and Sarkar, "Psychological Resilience," 16; Duncan Watts, *Understanding Resilience: Lessons for Member Care Workers.* Regnum Practitioner Series. Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2018. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib&db=nlebk&AN=1986008&authtype=sso&custid=asburyth&site=eds-live. Accessed December 12, 2022.

[21] George Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capability to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?," *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (Jan 2004): 25; Zolli and Healy, *Resilience*, 127.

perseverance, it is incomplete to see hardiness as the sum total of resilience.[22] Far too

frequently, in personal and public spaces discussing missions, I have heard people

who have not "just stuck it out" used as examples of those who are "not resilient." This

is particularly pernicious when the speaker is referring to themselves. In fact, the

conflation of grit and resilience is one of the sources of the "Missionary Hero" myth and

has resulted in a disturbing amount of wounding and pain within the missions

community.   The responsive side of resilience, which allows people to heal when they

are broken, is absolutely necessary for a complete understanding, particularly as

missionaries consider their own brokenness.

This responsive element is perhaps best illustrated in the metaphor frequently

used by Mr. Whiteman in describing resilience: Kintsugi. In this Japanese art form, a

vessel which has broken is repaired with gold. It is a philosophical statement, that

brokenness is not something to be hidden or disguised—in fact, being broken and

repaired actually makes the vessel more beautiful and valuable.[23] When we relate this

metaphor to missionaries, we see that the missionary who leaves the field but who

grows, matures, and finds a renewed relationship with God is just as resilient as the

one who stays in the country of service. In fact, the beauty of healed brokenness that

they have to offer may be far more valuable to the world and to the Kingdom.

Perhaps the most helpful aspect of resilience to be seen in the psychological

literature is this: **Resilience is dynamic**—it can be built/improved/increased/learned/

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[22] Rutter, "Resilience," 599.

[23] Kelly Richman-Abdou. "Kintsugi: The Centuries-Old Art of Repairing Broken Pottery with Gold," *My Modern Met,* September 5, 2019, accessed December 11, 2020, https://mymodernmet.com/kintsugi-kintsukuroi/.

developed.[24] No one is "just not resilient," and everyone is capable of becoming more resilient. Resilience is both a grace and a skill—something which is imparted to us and which we can actively foster. The idea that resilience can grow gives an enormous amount of hope, particularly for those who have not dealt with past adversity in the way they would like or who have not yet dealt with adversity but want to be prepared for its inevitability. It is never too late to become more resilient.

Psychologists recognize that resilience has multiple interwoven components (psychological, spiritual, physical) and takes place in a complex milieu of cultural, social, and personal systems.[25] This complexity means that resilience is not a given in all situations. Some people find resilience easy, while some do not; even for those with skills in resilience, the particular circumstances of the disruption may determine whether (and in what areas of life) those skills can be activated.[26] Some of these differences among and within individuals sometimes can be traced back to neuroscience. In a cross-discipline approach, the psychological literature acknowledges that brain/body research has much to teach about resilience,[27] including

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[24] Suniya Luthar, Dante Cicchetti, and Bronwyn Becker, "The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work," *Child Development* 71, no. 3 (May/June 2000): 546; Flach, *Resilience*, xv, 114, 121; Haglund, et. al., "Mechanisms of Resilience," 913; Zolli and Healy, *Resilience*, 15; Fletcher and Sarkar, "Psychological Resilience," 15, 17; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 16, 268, 290.

[25] Rutter, "Resilience," 599; Flach, *Resilience*, xii; Luthar, et al., "The Construct of Resilience," 548; Zolli and Healy, *Resilience*, 15, 17, 128-130; Fletcher and Sarkar, "Psychological Resilience," 14, 16; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 8, 27.

[26] Rutter, "Resilience," 599; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 27, 270.

[27] Haglund, et. al., "Mechanisms of Resilience," 891; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 20-21.

both its genetic components[28] and ways in which strategies such as meditation, exercise,[29] and building neuroplasticity[30] can increase resilience for individuals.

Much current resilience research focuses on personal factors which maintain/increase resiliency. For example, as part of its ongoing research-based efforts to create a new measurement tool to assess the resilience of humanitarian workers, the Headington Institute, which offers psychological care to over 100 humanitarian relief and emergency aid organizations,[31] has published "seven factors that seem to be critical for aid workers"[32] which line up with the findings of other prominent resilience researchers.[33] These factors are Adaptive Engagement, Spirituality, Emotional Regulation, Behavioral Regulation, Physical Fitness, Sense of Purpose, and Life Satisfaction.[34] One can see in this list the ways that some behaviors or beliefs can be either protective or responsive or both.

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[28] Rutter, "Resilience," 599; Haglund, et. al., "Mechanisms of Resilience," 893; Zolli and Healy, *Resilience*, 130-132, 139-140; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 21-24.

[29] Zolli and Healy, *Resilience*, 136-138.

[30] Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 24-25.

[31] The Headington Institute is a team of licensed psychologists who offer counseling, training, and consulting to humanitarian relief and emergency workers. Learn more at https://headington-institute.org.

[32] Anne Nolty, "Research Update: Insights from the HIRI," *Headington Institute*, April 3, 2015, accessed July 9, 2020, https://www.headington-institute.org/files/research-update_april-2015_55827.pdf.

[33] See, for example, Gang Wu, et al., "Understanding Resilience," *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* 7 (Feb 15, 2013), accessed July 9, 2020, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnbeh.2013.00010/full.

See also Haglund, et. al. "Mechanisms of Resilience."

See also Southwick and Charney, *Resilience:* traits of optimism, facing fear, moral compass, religion/spirituality, social support, role models, physical fitness, mental fitness, cognitive/emotional flexibility, finding meaning/purpose.

[34] Nolty, "Research Update."

For Christian missionaries, their faith is an important part of their life experience and resilient response. How does psycho-social research into resilience apply, then, to them? Based on the research of its members, the American Psychological Association states that resilience is something that can be intentionally increased through fostering "connection, wellness, healthy thinking and meaning."[35] Although concepts like "meaning making," "finding purpose," "helping others,"[36] and even religion[37] or "spiritual assets"[38] are mentioned in this body of psychological research, less research has been done in the area of religious belief/practice and resilience, and even less in Christianity and resilience. Particularly given the centrality of faith to mission service, this omission leaves a critical aspect of missionary resilience unexplored by conventional psychological literature.

Parallel Populations and Resilience

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[35] *American Psychological Association*, "Building Your Resilience," February 1, 2020, accessed June 16, 2020, https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience.

[36] Nan Henderson, *The Resiliency Workbook: Bounce Back Stronger, Smarter, & With Real Self-Esteem* (Solvang, CA: Resiliency in Action, Inc., 2012), 16, 26, 27; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 84, 100, 251.

[37] Zolli and Healy, *Resilience*, 128-129; Southwick and Charney, *Resilience*, 110, 122.

[38] See, for example, Daniel Maurer, *Endure: The Power of Spiritual Assets for Resilience to Trauma & Stress* (St. Paul, MN: Mount Curve Press, 2017).

Literature exists which examines similar populations and resilience. For example, there are books on resilience for expatriates,[39] expatriate children,[40] members of the caring professions,[41] church planters,[42] and pastors.[43] Although these resources are sometimes helpful in examining missionary resilience, they are often mostly repetition of what is found in the broader literature. For example, very similar definitions of resilience are often utilized.[44] There is a similar acknowledgement that adversity can be either chronic or acute,[45] and that resilience involves both protective and responsive aspects.[46] The complexity of resilience, with its physical, emotional, social, communal, and spiritual aspects, is acknowledged.[47] Research with parallel populations also shows that though it may be an individual experience, having a

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[39] Linda Janssen, *The Emotionally Resilient Expat: Engage, Adapt, and Thrive Across Culture* (London: Summertime Publishers, 2013)*.*

Keith J . Edwards, Carley H. Dodd, Katherine H. Rosenbusch, and Leonard J . Cerny II, "Measuring Expatriate Cross-Cultural Stress: A Reanalysis of the CernySmith Assessment," *Journal of Psychology and Theology 44, no. 4 (Win 2016): 268–80.*

[40] Julia Siemens, *Emotional Resilience and the Expat Child:Practical Tips and Storytelling Techniques that Will Strengthen the Global Family* (London: Summertime Publishers, 2011).

[41] Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, *The Resilient Practitioner*.

[42] Stefan Paas, and Marry Schoemaker, "Crisis and Resilience among Church Planters in Europe," Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies 35, no. 3 (September 2018): 366–88. doi:10.1163/15733831-12341590.

[43] Justine Allain-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors: The Role of Adversity in Healing and Growth* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2012).

[44] Allain-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 1, 5, 15; Janssen, *Resilient Expat*, 13,109; Paschal Baute and Maurice Mercier, *Resilience for the Inward Journey: A Program for Overcoming Addiction*: *Leader's Manual* (Lexington, KY: Baute Publishing, 2014)*,* vii; Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, *Resilient Practitioner,* 4, 125.

[45] Allain-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 15; Janssen, *Resilient Expat*, 14.

[46] Allain-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 13; Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, *Resilient Practitioner,* 129.

[47] Allain-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 18; Baute and Mercier, *Resilience for the Inward Journey*, 7, 27, 33, 51.

supportive social network and a spiritual connection are key for resilience.[48] And

finally, research and writing about similar populations also views resilience as a skill

which can be learned, rather than a personality trait which is fixed.[49]

      With all its benefits, each example of this literature still misses out on a key

focus of research into missionary resilience. Skovolt and Trotter-Mathison's *The*

Resilient Practitioner is research-based and practical, but it applies narrowly to those

who are working in the helping professions and the ways they can increase protective

factors to avoid burnout. *Resilient Pastors* speaks well to the unique experiences of

people in Christian leadership roles, and does a fine job bringing the general resilience

literature to bear; however, it does not contain a cross-cultural component. Paas and

Schoemaker's work on church planters is both small in scope (n=31) and is comprised

primarily of people who are not actually crossing cultural boundaries. Janssen's

Emotionally Resilient Expat is an excellent guide to the emotional experience of living

cross-culturally, but it devotes only a few pages to the idea of religion and spirituality.

Likewise, Edwards, et al. are focused on all people (missionaries, expats, military, etc)

who are crossing cultures rather than on missionaries specifically, and so they miss the

Christian dimension. *Emotional Resilience and the Expat Child* addresses the emotional

needs of expat children—or, more accurately, of children who live anywhere and are

experiencing change—but is entirely focused on children's emotional development

rather than a larger picture of resilience. It is undoubtedly a fantastic tool to assist

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[48] Allain-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 3, 29, 35; Janssen, *Resilient Expat*, 69, 78, 165, 261; Baute and Mercier, *Resilience for the Inward Journey,* 7, 12, 27.

[49] Allain-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors*, 18; Janssen, *Resilient Expat*, xvii, xx, 162; Baute and Mercier, *Resilience for the Inward Journey*, vii, 27.

parents, but beyond being a practical resource for missionary parents it is not helpful in examining missionary resilience.

Missionary Care and Resilience

Missionary care[50] literature contributes to an understanding of missionary resilience by covering some of the gaps found in general resilience literature: It is written specifically for those who 1) are living cross-culturally, 2) for the sake of their Christian faith. This body of literature tends to focus on best practices for mission sending agencies and missionary care professionals in promoting general missionary "wellness." Themes such as "cross-cultural adjustment,"[51] coping with stress in the missionary context,[52] and the importance of pastoral and/or mental health counseling predominate.

Within missionary care literature, there are few academic studies to be found, and none are directly related to resilience: Previous research assessed missionary stressors, finding that "interpersonal relationships" and "management issues" were primary themes in missionary stress.[53] In one of the most recent studies available, 364

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[50] Also sometimes referred to as "member care," "care for global workers," "worker care," etc.

[51] Marge Jones with E. Grant Jones, *Psychology of Missionary Adjustment* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1995).

[52] Lawrence Dodds and Lois Dodds, "Collected Papers on the Care of Missionaries" (Liverpool, PA: Heartstreams Resources, Inc., 2000); Lawrence Dodds and Lois Dodds, "Coping with Stress: What Cross-Cultural Workers Need to Know about Stress, Burnout, and Other Hazards of Living Abroad" (Liverpool, PA: Heartstreams Resources, Inc., 2000); Marjory Foyle, *Honorably Wounded: Stress Among Christian Workers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2009).

[53] Joan Carter, "Missionary Stressors and Implications for Care," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 27, no.2 (1999): 179.

missionaries reported that, though "informal care," which is provided by friends and colleagues is most helpful, in-house member care professionals who can listen to missionaries well and assist with "conflict resolution" and "debriefing after crisis/trauma" also benefits missionaries.[54] In more denominationally specific research, the attrition among 209 Assemblies of God World Missions missionaries serving in the Asia Pacific Region was examined using personnel records. This study found that nearly a third of missionaries studied left the field because of relationship problems (32.47%), with transfer to U.S. ministry (23.38%) and family related issues (19.48%) as the second and third causes of attrition.[55]

Additionally, some large-scale work has been done focusing on increasing longevity in the field and/or decreasing missionary attrition. The World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission launched the Reducing Missionary Attrition Project (ReMAP I) in 1994 in an effort to understand attrition, find ways to reduce it, and create resources to assist agencies and missionaries in doing so.[56] For this project, missions administrators in 14 countries were asked to report the numbers of missionaries leaving the field and the reasons they did so. The conclusion from the 528 "usable" survey forms turned in by mission agencies and churches was that about half of

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[54] Elisabet Hogstrom and Heather Davdiuk Gingrich,"Experiences and Utilization of Member Care in an International Missionary Sample," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 249.

[55] Russ Turney, *Leaving a Legacy: Increasing Missionary Longevity* (Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2013), 96.

[56] R. Taylor, ed, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1997), available online at bit.ly/2CgN2u5, xi, xiv; Rob Hay, et al., *WorthKeeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice Missionary Retention*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 10.

missionaries leaving the field do so for "unpreventable or personal reasons," while an additional quarter leave the field for "marriage/family" or "society" reasons.[57]

The follow-up study, ReMAP II, was undertaken in 2002 with an explicit goal of determining whether what was learned through ReMAP I was being used effectively to reduce attrition for preventable reasons by mission agencies.[58] Like its predecessor, ReMAP II polled mission sending agencies (over 600, representing 40,000 missionaries).[59] This time research was done with a special emphasis on "potentially preventable" reasons that people left the field. ReMAP II broke down the key reasons for preventable attrition to key factors throughout the missionary life-span, ultimately labeling retention as a "complex web of factors, not one factor or a few factors,"[60] with particular sending agencies' practices consistently helpful in keeping more missionaries in the field for longer periods of time.

Many helpful recommendations came out of the ReMAP II. The extensive list of "best practices" for mission agencies includes these factors: Smaller agencies should partner with others to provide the best selection, training, and care for missionaries. Missionaries should be well-equipped through education and training. Agencies should utilize a careful selection process that includes mental health evaluation, evaluation of previous ministry experience, and "tested call." Preparation that includes adequate pre-field training should be provided. Early field experiences of orientation and continuing training in situ are key to continuing success. Missionaries' spiritual

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[57] Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose,* 91.

[58] Hay, et al., *Worthkeeping*, 24.

[59] Ibid., 30.

[60] Ibid., 33.

lives should be attended to, both in selecting missionaries with healthy spiritual lives

and continuing to nurture that spiritual well-being, with an emphasis on spiritual

warfare. Agencies should support missionaries' "personal care," which includes such

things as "family issues, social and spiritual needs, health and safety concerns," along

with the way that teams in the field are built, encouraged in healthy functioning, and

taught to deal with conflict.[61] There are additional recommendations for the ways in

which organizations should put resources into member care, create and promote

helpful organizational values, train up leadership, develop staff, develop healthy

missionary ministries, create and maintain healthy and transparent financial practices,

and so on.[62]

For the purposes of understanding missionary resilience, the ReMAP studies are

helpful, in that one can certainly conclude that efforts by mission-sending agencies

which reduce attrition may also increase missionaries' health in the field and ability to

bounce back from adversity. However, this research also falls short in some key areas:

1) Its data is based entirely on the reporting of mission agencies, not missionaries

themselves. It is impossible to know how accurate an agency's understanding of a

missionary's situation is; additionally, mission agencies may have biases toward certain

answers which show the agency in the best light. 2) Studying "retention" and "attrition"

addresses only the issue of why missionaries leave the field. Understanding what

makes missionaries leave is very different from understanding what helps missionaries

be resilient or even what helps them to genuinely thrive in the field. 3) The data from

this study is almost 20 years old. It may be outdated, particularly given the rapid rate

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[61] Ibid., 39, 55, 69, 95, 105, 119, 131, 141, 149, 163, 175.

[62] Ibid., 181, 201-251, 252-274, 275-308, 309-338, 339-360.

of change in the world since 2002: Smart phones were only invented in 2007,

Facebook was created in 2004, and in September of 2002 less than 10% of the world

had access to the internet.

There has been one recent original study in missionary attrition that has bearing

on missionary resilience.[63] As part of advanced degree studies, experienced

missionary Andrea Sears did an online survey with 739 former missionaries.[64] By

evaluating both frequency of experience and the degree to which the experience

influenced the decision to leave the field,[65] Sears found that a set of family factors,[66]

team factors,[67] health factors,[68] expectations factors,[69] spiritual factors,[70] and mental

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[63] Sears, "Top Reasons for Missionary Attrition."

[64] Participants were gathered using snowball method (emails) and from advertising in missions newsletters such as MissioNexus and Velvet Ashes.

[65] Sears also collected qualitative data and has some amazing quotes from missionaries to back up/expand/explain each of the quantitative findings.

[66] "I want to be close to my aging/ailing parents,"
"There was a lack of options for my child/children's education."
Marriage Stressors
MK Stressors

[67] "I received too little missionary care."
"I felt that some of my team members lacked integrity."
"I did not feel at liberty to pursue my passion/call within the team/agency that I was a part of."
"There was conflict on the team."
"I struggled to understand my role on the team."
Gender Imbalances

[68] "I felt that stress affected my health."
"I felt that stress affected the health of others in my family."
"I experienced significant health problems."
Mental Health Issues
Contributing factors of stress, environment/pollution/allergies lack of support.

[69] "My team members did not meet my expectations."
"My job responsibilities did not meet my expectations."

[70] "I felt that I had a new call to something back in my home country."
"I worked myself out of a job."
"I no longer felt called to my host country."
"I was no longer sure of my calling (or my spouse was no longer sure of his/her calling).

health factors[71] contributed to missionaries' decision to leave the field.[72] Sears'

findings definitely parallel the findings of the Resilient Global Worker Study, and there is

much to glean from them in terms of best practices. However, like the ReMAP studies,

Sears' work is based on what makes missionaries leave, not what helps them thrive in

the field or out of it.

There are two additional research studies related to missionary care that are

worth mentioning: the work of Bagley and the work of Van Meter. Van Meter's "U.S.

Report of Findings on Missionary Retention"[73] was specifically designed to be a follow-

up to the ReMAP I. Van Meter looked at retention using data from 78 U.S. mission

agencies and found that on average (with much higher rates for non-denominational

agencies than denominational agencies), mission organizations would lose 43% of their

missionaries over a 10-year period, with 20% of missionaries from denominational

agencies and 60% of those from non-denominational agencies leaving for preventable

reasons.[74] Van Meter also discovered attributes of higher-retention organizations; these

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[71] "I experienced burnout."
   "I, my spouse, or my child suffered from depression."
   "I, my spouse, or my child suffered from anxiety."
   "I experienced discouragement."
   "I had too many stressors."
   "I felt isolated/lonely."
   "I had a traumatic experience not covered above."
   "It was difficult to set boundaries on what was demanded of me."
   "Frequent transitions caused a lack of stability."

[72] Although high numbers of missionaries experienced cultural stress, difficulty adjusting to culture or learning the language, and financial stress, these were not significant factors in leaving the field in and of themselves.

[73] Jim Van Meter, "US report of findings on missionary retention." Paper developed through steering committee of the High Leigh Conference. (London, England, 2003.) Accessed December 15, 2022. https://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_95_link_1292358708.pdf

[74] Van Meter, "Missionary Retention," 5.

findings may be helpful in thinking about how to help missionaries with an increase in protective resilience skills.

Bagley's "Trauma and Traumatic Stress Among Missionaries"[75] worked directly with 31 missionaries from Wesleyan World Missions and found that, although missionaries in his study were much more likely to experience traumatic events than were their counterparts who stayed home,[76] especially because of their exposure to violent crime and civil unrest/war,[77] this greater rate of trauma did not correlate to an increase in PTSD among these missionaries.[78] Although this research focused on trauma and not resilience, it has bearing on this dissertation. Bagley's supposition that missionaries have learned how to deal with stress, giving them greater skills for coping with trauma, along with his assumption that missionaries' religious commitment acts as a support in situations of trauma,[79] parallel some of the findings in this dissertation.

Outside the realm of original research, much of the available missionary care writing is based in the author's experience and or anecdotal evidence rather than

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[75] Robert Bagley, "Trauma and Traumatic Stress among Missionaries," Journal of Psychology and Theology 31, no. 2 (Sum 2003): 97–109.

[76] Bagley, "Trauma and Traumatic Stress," 104.

[77] Ibid., 105.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid, 106.

academic research.[80] In the late 1980s, however, Michele and Kelly O'Donnell headed

up an effort to move missionary care to a more academic level, bringing together the

first edited "scholarly" volume on missionary care as it relates to mental health.[81] The

resultant *Helping Missionaries Grow: Readings in Mental Health and Missions* is an

excellent example of the literature in missionary care both as it existed in the 1980s

and moving forward.[82] Some articles are written based on personal experience,[83]

some are application of more general psychology in the missionary setting,[84] while

others are based on original research projects.[85] Authors are a mixture of

psychologists, counselors, missionaries, and mission agency staff. The primary goal of

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[80] It is important to state that such literature is valuable, but its value is that of a collection of case studies, rather than an academically rigorous data set which has been thoroughly analyzed utilizing a theoretical framework.

See, for example, Christine Aroney-Sine, *Survival of the Fittest: Keeping Yourself Healthy in Travel and Service Overseas* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994); Neal Pirolo, *The Reentry Team: Caring For Your Returning Missionaries* (San Diego, CA: Emmaus Road, Intl., 2000); Neal Pirolo, *Serving As Senders: How to Care for Your Missionaries* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2006); Jere Phillips, *The Missionary Family: Managing Stress Effectively* (Collierville, TN: Innovo Publishing, 2013); John Certalic, *Them: The Richer Life Found in Caring for Others* (Milwaukee, WI: HenschelHAUS Publishing, 2016)*.*

[81] Kelly O'Donnell and Michele Lewis O'Donnell, *Helping Missionaries Grow: Readings in Mental Health and Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1988), xi.

[82] See also: John Powell and Joyce Bowers, eds., *Enhancing Missionary Vitality: Mental Health Professionals Serving Global Mission* (Palmer Lake, CO: Mission Training International, 1999)*.* This volume is highly specialized for the Missionary Care practitioner but contains a similar mix of articles and authors.

See also: Leslie Andrews, *The Family in Mission: Understanding and Caring for Those Who Serve* (Palmer Lake, CO: Mission Training International, 2004). This volume's focus is primarily on issues faced by those raising children in the field, such as education, helping children thrive, etc.

[83]See for example: Kenneth Williams, "Worksheet on Balanced Living," in *Helping Missionaries Grow*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell and Michele Lewis O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1988), 390-398.

[84] See, for example: Margaret Hopper Taylor, "Personality Development in the Children of Missionary Parents," in *Helping Missionaries Grow*, 229-239.

[85] See, for example: Margaret Hopper Taylor, "Personality Development in the Children of Missionary Parents," in *Helping Missionaries Grow* ed. Kelly O'Donnell and Michele Lewis O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1988), 229-239.

the collection is 1) to continue to make the case for mental health care for missionaries, 2) to place mental health care within the missionary framework for individuals and agencies, and 3) to describe some practical tools for improving mental health throughout the missionary's "life-span." A very few articles focus on things like "stress," and none discuss the often greater traumas of missionary service or resilience in the face of adversity.

In later works, the idea of resilience does come up. First of all, the idea of "resilient teams" is discussed by O'Donnell.[86] He bases his model of what missionary teams should be doing on research into healthy families (although the links to actual research are difficult to determine); the definition, then, of "resilient" focuses on psychological and relational health and perseverance. Additionally, the introduction to the first section of O'Donnell's more recent book *Global Member Care* is titled "Resilient People in Difficult Places: Exploring Member Care in Mission/Aid." This section examines some of the unique stresses and difficulties faced by missionaries and aid workers in a way that seeks to be highly practical. It defines resilience as "the inner strength, consistent practices, and social supports necessary to successfully deal with and grow through life's challenges."[87]

There is no doubt that a focus on helping missionaries deal with difficult experiences is helpful. However, this is more properly a definition of "hardiness" than of resilience. In the second volume of the *Global Member Care* series, which focuses

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[86] Kelly O'Donnell, "Building Resilient Teams: The CACTUS Kit," in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World,* ed. Kelly O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 391-398.
See also Kelly O'Donnell, "Upgrading Relational Resiliency," in *Global Member Care: Volume One: The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011)*,* 101-110*.*

[87] O'Donnell, *Global Member Care: Vol 1,* 61.

specifically on humanitarian work (non-Christian and Christian), the Red Cross gives

this definition of resilience: "Resilience is a person's ability to cope with challenges and

difficulties, and to restore and maintain a new balance when the old one is challenged

or destroyed."[88] It is the second half of this definition which I believe is missing from

O'Donnell's work in this area: resilience is actually **most** needed in situations when

missionaries can not, in and of themselves, "deal with and grow through" life's

challenges—when their world is broken by the adversity they face.

Within missionary care literature, there are two notable resources that do seem

to use this definition of resilience. In Gardner's book, *Healthy, Resilient and Effective in*

Cross-Cultural Ministry, she defines "resilience" as that which "enables people to face,

endure, and bounce back from great tragedy and experience a new level of wholeness,

health, and faith."[89] Gardner is careful to differentiate "hardiness" from resilience,

pointing out that resilience is only obvious in circumstances that go beyond a

missionaries' normal coping abilities. Beyond this helpful definition, she devotes some

time in this book to a discussion of missionary grief and loss and crisis/trauma

situations. This volume is based on a lifetime of work in missions and in member care,

and it is a treasure trove of wisdom for those who work within sending agencies.

However, it is primarily a practical handbook rather than an academic look at research-

based best practices. Perhaps most importantly, although Gardner is referring to

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[88]International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society Reference Center for Psychosocial Support, "Resilience, Risk, and Responsibility: Caring for Volunteers: A Psychosocial Support Toolkit," in *Global Member Care: Volume Two: Crossing Sectors for Serving Humanity,* eds. Kelly O'Donnell and Michele Lewis O'Donell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013)*,* 337.

[89] Laura Mae Gardner, *Healthy, Resilient, and Effective in Cross-Cultural Ministry: A Comprehensive Member Care Plan* (Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Komunitas Katalis, 2015), 42.

resilience as a quality of bouncing back from adversity, this definition seems to be more incidental than a focus of the book; by emphasizing the idea that resilience only becomes clear under very difficult circumstances, Gardner shifts the weight of her book to practices that will increase "hardiness," and which **may**, perhaps, as a result contribute to resilience.

The other work utilizing the full definition of "resilience," and a final resource that needs to be mentioned in the area of member care, is Schaefer and Schaefer's *Trauma and Resilience: A Handbook*. The focus of this practical handbook is trauma as defined by experiences of "any serious event that threatens or affects the life or physical integrity of a person, or a loved one."[90] Resilience, then, is seen as "posttraumatic growth," in which those experiencing trauma later either grow to be "fully restored" or "restored to a place even stronger than before."[91] *Trauma and Resilience* is another very helpful volume, particularly in its efforts to define and describe trauma, to explain what elements make trauma more or less severe[92] and to incorporate psychological models of resilience after trauma.[93] Although it is certainly designed as a practical handbook to allow Christian individuals and communities to

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[90] Frauke and Charles Schaefer, "Preface," in *Trauma and Resilience: A Handbook: Effectively Supporting Those Who Serve God,* eds. Frauke and Charles Schaefer (Fresno, CA: Condeo Press, 2012), v-vi.
Note: Although different authors use different definitions for "trauma," this is the definition utilized in this dissertation.

[91] Ibid., ii.

[92] See Karen Carr, "Normal Reactions After Trauma," in *Trauma and Resilience: A Handbook: Effectively Supporting Those Who Serve God,* eds. Frauke and Charles Schaefer (Fresno, CA: Condeo Press, 2012), 45-50.

[93] Frauke Schaeffer, "Healthy Stress Management," in *Trauma and Resilience: A Handbook: Effectively Supporting Those Who Serve God,* eds. Frauke and Charles Schaefer (Fresno, CA: Condeo Press, 2012)*,* 107-108.

assist each other and themselves in the face of trauma, its basic principles seem to be drawn from research and literature within relevant fields. Additionally, it references many of the aspects of missionary life that are unique—both the cross-cultural experience and the (specifically Christian) spiritual resources in member care. In missionary care literature, it comes the closest to being both academically rigorous and based in the relevant definition of resilience. However, its focus on trauma—on the extremes of crisis which threaten life and limb—limit its direct applicability to other forms of adversity faced by all missionaries.

Missionary care literature, then, has several shortcomings in terms of the study of missionary resilience: Often it is based in the personal experience of the writer, or the author's interpretation of other peoples' experiences, rather than in broader research or scholarly inquiry. Rarely does it address the responsive aspects of resilience. Hardiness, thriving, self-care, dealing with stress—yes, these protective factors come up a lot—but not responsive resilience. When missionary care literature does specifically examine resilience, it often defines resilience inadequately as something more akin to hardiness, rather than acknowledging that the experiences that require resilience are the very ones which we cannot grit our way through. Even when member care experts write from a solid scholarly base and actually discuss bouncing back from—rather than forging through—adversity, primarily it is acute trauma and not the cumulative stresses and slow-burn losses of working cross-culturally that is addressed. Because a full understanding of resilience involves both protective and responsive factors, in both the long- and short-term, under circumstances where adversity is extreme enough to impact the missionary, this body of literature is useful in

understanding some of the unique adversities faced by missionaries, but it is not as useful in understanding the broader picture of how they are and may become resilient.

Missionary Resilience

Having examined general psychological literature in resilience, a sampling of the writing on adjacent populations, and missionary care literature, we now turn to the currently available writing which specifically focuses on missionary resilience. In addition to more formal writings, my own experience in the mission world has shown me that the vast majority of missionaries and missionary care personnel have anecdotal stories and opinions about what makes a missionary resilient. However, when it comes to direct, academically rigorous study of missionary resilience, surprisingly little work has been done. In fact, at the time of writing, it was only possible to locate four peer-reviewed, published studies directly related to missionary resilience.

In their study, Selby, et al. interviewed and then surveyed 15 Australian former missionaries with the goal of learning about identity issues experienced by missionaries.[94] The primary finding of this study was that returning missionaries experience "personal/relational identity gaps," and that a difference between their self-perceived identity and the perception of family/friends, faith communities, and/or sending agencies correlated to less psychological resilience.[95] While the exploration of

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[94] Selby, et al. "Special People? An Exploratory Study into Re-entering Missionaries' Identity and Resilience," *Journal of Religion and Health* 50, no.4 (December 2011): 1007.

[95] Ibid., 1013-1014.

identity formation and the missionary is interesting, the uniformity and size of the

sample (15 Australian Protestants) calls into question how broadly applicable this data

is. Additionally, though the authors assert that those whom they label as "fragile" have

poorer mental health than those they categorize as "resilient," this categorization is

based on the administration of a scale that is designed to screen for depression,

anxiety, and stress rather than actually measuring the full state of a participant's mental

health.[96]

In a larger study performed in 2005, Schaefer, et al. looked at traumatic events

and their effect on missionaries. Though the main focus of this research was trauma

and posttraumatic results, resilience as an aspect of overall mental health is mentioned

in the research goals, and the Conor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was one of

several evaluations administered. The study's 256 participants were purposefully

recruited from two groups: "one representing a predominantly stable cross-cultural

setting with lower contextual stress and the other an unstable setting with higher

contextual stress."[97] In this study, higher numbers of traumatic events correlated with

both negative experiences such as depression and stress and the positive experience

of greater resilience. The researchers' own postulation is that the way in which these

two seemingly opposite effects are felt may mean that missionaries' "very high stress

levels may eventually override excellent coping skills."[98] One value of this study is that

it explicitly examines how spirituality and meaning-making affect posttraumatic

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[96] Selby, et al. "Resilience in Re-Entering Missionaries: Why Do Some Do Well?" *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture* 12 no. 7 (November 2009): 706.

[97] Frauke Schaefer, et al, "Traumatic Events and Posttraumatic Stress in Cross-cultural Mission Assignments," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 20: 537.

[98] Ibid., 538.

experience; because missionaries are (at least ostensibly) in the field because of their faith, this seems like it would be a key component of their experience. This study is also helpful in its larger scope; however, the value of the findings is limited because the main focus of the research is not resilience but trauma.

The most recent research in this area is a study on missionary "risk and resilience" published in October, 2019.[99] In this study, the authors administered both the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) and the Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory, 2nd Edition (DRRI-2) to a group of 268 missionaries and faith-based humanitarian aid workers. The primary findings of this study were that pre-field preparation and negative events (either before going to the field or while in the field) affect resilience. It is interesting to note that the DRRI-2 was designed for use in the military to understand the ways that combat deployment affects veterans' health and well-being.[100] As such, it examines a wider variety of external factors; this is a strength of this project. However there are two main drawbacks of this study. The first is that the spiritual/religious component of missionary work is under-examined. The second is that Thom, Davis, and Tseng did not include any interviews in their research. As was the case with Shaefer, et al., the conclusions are based entirely on survey material.

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[99] Nathaniel Thom, Pamela Davis, and Luke Tseng, "The Implications of Pre-Field Training, Negative Family-Related Events, and Negative Pre-Field Events for Resilience Among Cross-Cultural Workers," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (October 2019).

[100] *PTSD: National Center for PTSD.* "History of the Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory-2 (DRRI-2)." https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/deployment/DRRI-history.asp. Accessed June 12, 2020.

It is worth noting that another article written on this data set[101] is in conflict with

the findings of the RMS. First of all, the authors argued based on Schaefer's work[102]

that men were more likely to experience severe trauma in the field than were women,[103]

while in these Interviews women (at 26.74%) were actually more likely to report

experiences of trauma than men were (at 17.81%). Secondly, the authors found that

women scored lower on the CD-RISC than men, on average.[104] The difference in

reporting trauma may stem from the difficulty of measuring trauma due to the

possibilities of under-reporting, sample size issues, etc. The difference in CD-RISC

scores is more difficult to explain, in part because little detail is given in terms of the

intersection of other demographic data and gender. For example, were the men in the

study older, on average? (The RMS shows a correlation between age and higher CD-

RISC score.) Were the women surveyed predominantly from fields in Africa? (The RMS

shows a negative correlation between CD-RISC score and service in Africa.) Because

of these questions about the data set and Davis, Thom, and Bowden's interpretation, I

believe the RMS data on CD-RISC to be more reliable. Nonetheless, it seems important

to mention this contradictory study in this dissertation.

Finally, in published content on missionary resilience, Duncan Watts' work is

worth noting. Although Watts did not do original research for this book based on his

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[101] Pamela Davis, Nathaniel Thom, and Casey Bowden, "Gender Differences on Measures of Risk and Resilience Among Faith-Based Cross-Cultural Workers," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 2, No.3, (2020): 184-196.

[102] Schaefer, et al., "Traumatic Events," 534-535.

[103] Davis, et al., "Gender Differences," 185.

[104] Davis, et al., "Gender Differences," 193.

master's thesis, his *Understanding Resilience: Lessons for Member Care Workers*[105] still contains helpful resources. Watts gives an extensive literature review which includes the following ideas: resilience as dynamic, response to adversity as affected by various factors, protective factors and responses, and the different ways that resilience is defined/misconstrued within the mission community. He also gives some excellent information on neurobiology and resilience.

In addition to these published resources, several recent dissertations have focused on aspects of missionary resilience. Melissa Winfield used several different survey instruments, including the CD-RISC, to compare the trauma experiences and resilience of 50 college students who had been "missionary kids" (MKs) with a group of 47 who were not. Her conclusion in relation to resilience was that there was no difference in CD-RISC scores between MKs and her non-MK comparison group.[106] Winfield did not include any qualitative measures in her study. Additionally, there were some issues with her sampling. In my opinion, this study is of limited use because its primary focus is on the adjustment to college of MKs, rather than a broader focus on resilience.

In a 2015 study, Morgan Sorensen utilized the Cerny Smith Assessment (CSA), Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI), and Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL), along with reports from those who had coached participants, to determine whether a particular training program utilized by Church Resource Ministries (CRM) increased

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[105] Duncan Watts, *Understanding Resilience: Lessons for Member Care Workers,* Regnum Practitioner Series. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2018).

[106] Melissa Winfield, "The Effects of Trauma on Adjustment to College for Children of Missionaries" (George Fox University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017, 10695745), 16.

missionaries' "cross-cultural resilience and adjustment."[107] Sorenson defined

"missionary resilience" as thriving "spiritually, relationally, and culturally."[108] There were

six participants in this training that year, so their experiences were written up as case

studies.[109] The way in which Sorensen defines resilience, along with the extremely

limited size of his sample, makes this study unhelpful.

Cook administered the Resilience Scale (RS-14) and the God Image Scale to 54

American (Evangelical) missionaries in an attempt to assess the relationship between

the two. His conclusion was that a "weak, non-significant correlation was found

between God image and resilience."[110] While the inclusion of spirituality/religiosity as

an aspect of missionary resiliency is helpful, the narrow scope of this study makes it

less applicable to the field as a whole.

Because of both my husband's and my extensive personal research in this area,

I am aware of some additional projects done within the missionary care community in

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[107] Morgan Sorenson, "Developing Resilience in North American Missionaries: Program Evaluation of CRM's *Adelante* Training," (Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Psychology, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019) 2, 20.

[108] Ibid., 58. It is notable that half of the participants in this study/set of case studies ended up leaving the field.

[109] Ibid., 21.

[110] Ronald Cook, "An Examination of God Image and Resilience Among U.S. Evangelical Missionaries" (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2018. 13877181), Abstract.

an effort to understand aspects of missionary resilience.[111] However, these projects

have not been written up/presented in formats readily available to the general public,

and no determination can be made as to their academic value. Therefore, they have

not been used in this dissertation.

The Resilient Missionary Study

Finally, in considering the work that has been done so far specifically on

Missionary Resilience, it is important to examine what Geoff Whiteman and his

research team have been able to do with the original Resilient Missionary Study. The

RMS is unique in the body of current mission research. No other study on resilience

has had such a large, diverse participant group. I would also argue that the

quantitative analysis has revealed previously unknown (or at least previously unproven)

and important points about missionary resilience; chief among these findings would be

that age, but not length of service, correlated in a statistically significant manner with

higher resilience, which ties into other research findings that resilience is a skill that can

be learned. Additionally, it seems important to note that, although the only article yet

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[111] See, for example, Karen Carr's 2011 Plenary Paper for the Mental Health and Missions conference, "Resilient Cross Cultural Living: Unique Perspectives from Single Missionaries," which discussed an unpublished survey project comparing experiences of married and single missionaries. No measurement of resilience was utilized, though "resilience and strength" are mentioned as desirable for missionaries.

Karen Carr, "Resilient Cross Cultural Living: Unique Perspectives from Single Missionaries." Plenary Paper at Mental Health and Missions Conference, Angola, IN, November 2011, accessed January 16, 2023, bit.ly/2ChPiBh.

published out of this data is a set of "Preliminary Findings,"[112] Whiteman has given

presentations on this material which have shown its applicability and resonance with

the lived experiences of missionaries and those who care for them.[113]

There are two limitations to Whiteman's qualitative analysis that warrant writing a

dissertation utilizing this same data set. First of all, Whiteman and his team set out to

analyze the answers to the written essays without an overarching theoretical

framework. Although the work was, I believe, sound as far as it went, much more can

be learned from this data utilizing a Narrative Inquiry framework, which allows an in-

depth understanding of these missionaries' stories. A second, and even more

important, limitation is the number of interviews Whiteman and his team were able to

analyze: approximately one in three. Due to time and budget constraints, Whiteman's

team read and coded answers ending in 3, 6, and 9. This means that there are literally

hundreds of answers, hundreds of stories, that had not been read before this

dissertation, let alone read with an eye toward understanding, analyzing, and

amplifying those voices.

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[112] Whiteman et al., "Preliminary Findings."
  There is, admittedly, also more work to be done with the quantitative analysis of this Study, but that is not the focus of this dissertation.

[113] Geoff Whiteman and Kriss Whiteman, Workshops: "The Resilient Missionary Model" and "How Missionaries Become Resilient," PTM Conference, October 9 and 10, 2019. Plenary: "How Missionaries Become Resilient," Mental Health and Missions (MHM) Conference, November 23, 2019.

Conclusion

In summary, there are certainly insights into missionary resilience in psychological literature, literature studying adjacent populations, missionary care literature, and studies in missionary resilience. However, each of these areas is either too broad or misses out on some vital aspect of missionaries' experiences of resilience. Given the paucity of research into missionary resilience and the limited analysis thus far of this data set, I believe that the further examination offered in this dissertation is absolutely vital.

Much can be gleaned from the stories that missionaries have been willing to share. The stories they choose, the way in which they describe themselves and their experiences, and the general themes and patterns found within and across their narratives reveals a great deal both about the protective and responsive factors in their lives. These missionaries' voices are worth listening to, learning from, and amplifying as they share their stories of growth in resilience.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As I approach describing my research methodology, it is vital to keep in mind the central question I am seeking to answer: **How do missionaries express their experience of the journey toward greater resilience?** The way in which the data for this dissertation was gathered, passed on as a secondary data set, and analyzed in full all contributed to the answer.

In this chapter I will first describe the original research design, both the survey which led to the written interview and the interview itself. Secondly I will describe the dataset I worked with. After detailing why I chose to utilize Narrative Inquiry to examine this data, I will describe my analysis of the data. After examining my own biases and the steps I have taken to mitigate them, I will describe some of the limitations of this methodology. I will then offer some information on the demographic

and psychographic make up of those missionaries who participated in the Written

Interview. Finally, I will offer a brief concluding summary.

Research Design

The Resilient Missionary Study: Survey Portion

Geoffrey Whiteman's design was a grounded theory methodology with

qualitative and quantitative elements. The original quantitative portion of the Resilient

Missionary Study (RMS)[114] was distributed between September of 2017 and February

of 2018, using the snowball sampling method.[115] In order to participate in the survey,

respondents had to be fluent in English and not part of a protected class (as defined by

federal regulation). The RMS Survey contained questions on demographics and

psychographics and included the Conor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC, 25-

item). There were 1,044 respondents to the initial survey. Incomplete, duplicate, and

ineligible respondents (152) were removed from the sample, leaving a final sample size

of 892 participants.

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[114] The Resilient Missionary Survey is still available at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ResilientSurvey.

[115] Mr. Whiteman and I personally contacted as many missionaries, former missionaries, and members of missionary organizations as we personally knew. Additionally, Mr. Whiteman sent out initial invitations to a small email-subscriber list. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to nominate others to participate in the survey. These nominees would receive an email telling them that someone saw them as a "resilient missionary" and inviting them to participate in the survey. This system proved to be highly effective in soliciting responses.

The demographic portion of the RMS was analyzed by Mr. Whiteman and a team of research assistants, including me.[116] As a part of this analysis, participants were separated into categories according to standard deviations in CD-RISC scores: Highest (+2 SD), High (+1 SD), Average, Low (-1 SD), and Lowest (-2 SD).[117] Stressors, Supports, and Desired Resources were analyzed according to these categories, with some differences seen between CD-RISC score categories.

In the initial survey portion of the Resilient Missionary Study, there was one question which offered qualitative data. In the psychographic portion of the survey, Mr. Whiteman asked the following neutral, open-ended question: "What else about yourself or your experience as a missionary would you like to share?" More than half of participants chose to answer this question (54.48%, n=486). An analysis of these answers was undertaken by the research team using Atlas.ti. This qualitative analysis found differences between answers for those in different Resilience Groups. Further analysis of the write-ins of the Survey portion was undertaken by Mr. Whiteman and me in 2021; the results of this work, which focused on what missions agencies can do to support missionaries, were published in the Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ) in spring of 2022.[118]

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[116] Other research assistants: Emily Edwards (primary on statistical analysis), and Anna Savelle-Walker.

[117] See Appendix A for a brief synopsis of the quantitative findings.

[118] Geoff Whiteman and Kristina Whiteman, "Supporting Today's Global Workers Toward Missional Resilience," *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* 58, Is. 2 (April-June 2022), accessed December 16, 2022, https://missionexus.org/supporting-todays-global-workers-toward-missional-resilience/.

The Resilient Missionary Study: Written Interviews

The original design for the Resilient Missionary Study assumed that approximately 100 people would respond and 10-15 would be chosen for semi-structured follow-up interviews; the overwhelming response made this plan impossible. When over half of the survey respondents asked for information about the interview portion, the decision was made to adapt the semi-structured interview into a written interview. Mr. Whiteman created three sets of questions, asking participants about the ways that becoming more resilient had changed them, how others had helped with that process, and how they themselves had contributed. With the goal of making these written interviews as much like sitting down and talking to him as possible, he recorded a short introductory video which participants saw at the beginning of the process. This made expectations clear, informed participants about the preliminary results of the survey portion, and established rapport with participants.[119] Before the first question segment, Whiteman prepared participants with a written invitation to "spend a few minutes reducing distractions in order to quiet your mind and heart" and "invite the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth about your experience." Below this written paragraph, Whiteman then posted another short video referencing Christ's Resurrection as the source of all resilience, read 2 Corinthians 4:5-10, introduced his own metaphorical narrative comparing missionary resilience to the Japanese art form of Kintsugi, and re-issued a similar verbal invitation to prepare. The first set of questions is on the same page as the video, while the second two sets are on separate pages.

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[119] A link to Mr. Whiteman's original survey can be found at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JXRQ95Z.

All participants who had requested information about verbal interviews (n=515) were emailed an invitation to participate in the Written Interview. Of these, 247 answered at least one question-set. Mr. Whiteman had hoped for fifteen to twenty minutes of effort; participants gave a mean time of 47 minutes to answer these three sets of questions:

- **Overall, how has your life changed as you have become more resilient?** *How has your approach to ministry changed? How has your relationship with God been affected? How about your relationship with others? Your view of yourself?*

- **As you remember your missionary experience, who specifically stands out as supportive?** *What was their function or role in your life? At what point and for how long did they come alongside you? What did they do to support you?*

- **As you remember your missionary experience, think about the specific ways you responded to adversity that were helpful.** *What did you, personally, do that was helpful? How did your attitudes, thinking, or beliefs change? What did you do differently? How did your lifestyle or habits change? In what ways did earlier adversity help you prepare for later adversity?*

Respondents' answers were collected through Survey Monkey, placed in a spreadsheet and anonymized by Mr. Whiteman, and turned over to the original research team for analysis. In this process, each participant was given a number. Mr. Whiteman also created an extensive codebook, which he and I refined as needed along the way. Savelle-Walker and I read and coded the quotes whose numeration ended in 3, 6, and 9. From this preliminary reading of less than 1/3 of the answers, Mr. Whiteman put together the ideas of "turning toward God, others, and ourselves for loving support" as a path for growing in Christ's resilience. This was a formative process for me, one which not only familiarized me with the data set but also was the source for my wanting to be further involved with the Resilient Missionary Study.

Data: The Resilient Missionary Study Written Interview

After my dissertation proposal was approved, in January of 2022, Mr. Whiteman turned over the Written Interview data set to me. This was in the form of an anonymized list of answers to the three question sets; some demographic data was in the chart which Mr. Whiteman gave me, while other demographic data had to be gleaned from separate (still anonymized) spreadsheets that Mr. Whiteman provided me with in February/March.

Analysis Methodology:

An Introduction to the Narrative Inquiry Framework

We tell ourselves stories in order to live.…We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.[120]

Stories matter. They are the means by which we internally interpret events, form our identity, and share our lives with the world: "The stories we tell about ourselves reveal ourselves, construct ourselves, and sustain ourselves through time."[121]

Narrative Inquiry (NI)[122] is a qualitative research method that examines "lived and told stories and story talk."[123] Based on the belief that narrative, or story, is the best

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[120] Joan Didion, *The White Album* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 11.

[121] Kate McLean, et al., "The Empirical Structure of Narrative Identity: The Initial Big Three," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (April 18, 2019): 3, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000247.

See also Dan McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997).

See also Dan McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich, *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 3: "We are all storytellers, and we are the stories we tell."

See also Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008)*,* 10.

See also Dan McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), xiii, 55.

[122] The terms "Narrative Analysis" and "Narrative Inquiry" are often used interchangeably. I prefer "Narrative Inquiry," because to me it implies that I am examining stories and asking them questions; it feels more in-line with the way I perceive my role as a researcher.

[123] Jean Clandinin, ed., *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2007), 35-36.

way to understand experience,[124] the goal of such inquiry is to understand the actual

lives of participants.[125] Human beings naturally engage in narrative thinking in order to

make sense of what they are experiencing;[126] there is a "reflexive relationship between

living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story."[127] Story

is one way to comprehend the complexity of people's lives: to understand what

actually happens to them; how they make meaning of it; how they affect and are

affected by the world around them; and the interplay between past, present, and future

events. In short, "The answer to the question, Why narrative? is, Because

experience."[128]

In the field of Anthropology, Narrative Inquiry hails back to the work of Clifford

Geertz, who said that, "To an ethnographer…the shapes of knowledge are always

ineluctably local."[129] It is only through looking at the particular that one can understand

the universal.[130] Narrative, according to Geertz, is how we can understand changes

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[124] Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco, CA: 2000)*,* 18.

See also: "When we seek to understand why a person does something, we look to narrative," McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 56.

[125] Clandinin, *Handbook*, 37, 38, 69. Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 20, 78. See also Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, eds. *Doing Narrative Research,* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 2.

[126] Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 85; Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 18, 19; Clandinin, *Handbook*, 38, 41; McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, xx.

[127] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 71.

[128] Clandinin and Connelly*, Narrative Inquiry,* 50. McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 60.

[129] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 4.

[130]Clandinin, *Handbook* 8, 22, 30. See also 491.
Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 18, 23, 28, 30, 49, 53.

that have happened or are happening,[131] which makes it extremely valuable in an ever-shifting world.   Jerome Bruner, a key figure in Narrative Inquiry because of his psychological approach of "narrative modes of knowing," focused in particular on autobiography and life narratives.[132] This is a key justification of narrative inquiry—autobiography, as a process, brings together who the author was in the past with the needs and thoughts of the present to affect the future.[133] Narrative, Bruner said, is a central form of human thinking which plays a key role in the construction of the Self, identity, and reality itself.[134]

The Triadic Lens of Narrative Inquiry

All this is the theoretical side of Narrative Inquiry. What does it mean for actual, practical research? In order to understand experiences, both of an individual and of larger populations, narrative inquirers frame their research with a triad of "terms" which form the boundaries of the inquiry: sociality, temporality, and place.[135]

Sociality can also be referred to as "interaction." Both the circumstances of the

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[131] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 6, 8.
Geertz, *After the Fact,* 3.
See also Geertz, *After the Fact*, 20, 26.
See also Geertz, *Interpretation*, 9, 15, 20.

[132] Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research* 71, 3 (2004): 694; Clandinin, *Handbook*, 100; Andrews, et al., *Narrative Research*, 3, 5.

[133] Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 109; Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 694; Clandinin, *Handbook*, 138; McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 60, 66.

[134] Bruner, "Narrative Construction," 4, 5-6; McAdams, *Personal Myths*, 11; Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 694; Clandinin, *Handbook*, 100; Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods*, 8; McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 71.

[135] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 50.

individual—their "internal hopes, feelings, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions"

—and the social conditions in which they are having the experience are examined as

they impact and interact with one another.[136] Sociality may be intrapersonal—how the

stories I tell myself affect my experiences and the meanings I attribute to them—or

interpersonal—exchanges with other people or with the social conditions of culture:

institutions, status, role, and so on. This aspect of context is absolutely critical to

understanding experience through narrative.[137]

Temporality can also be thought of as "continuity." All experiences happen at a

particular time, and so narratives describing experience are part of a temporal

continuity.[138] It seems somewhat obvious that as stories from the past are told, they

impact present thoughts, feelings, and internal structures and thereby impact

experiences of the future:[139] As I tell the story of an angry encounter with my neighbor,

I feel that anger within me, and I again feel justified in that anger. I tell the story to

several different people, each time reinforcing my own feelings of righteous rage. The

next time I see my neighbor, anger is already top of mind for me, and I end up speaking

to him sharply. If he responds in kind, I may find myself locked into a self-perpetuating

cycle.

What is perhaps less evident, however, is that the opposite flow is also true—as

a story is told about a past event, present internal thoughts and feelings about it, and

even future expectations of a reaction, color how and what is told, and thus the past is

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[136] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry,* 41, 42, 50.

[137] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry,* 32. McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, xiii, xx, 57.

[138] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry,* 29, 40.

[139] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry,* 40, 41. Clandinin, *Handbook*, 138.

affected by the present and future:[140] If I know that you are best friends with my neighbor, when I tell you the story I am careful both to acknowledge my own fault and to minimize my own angry reaction. I receive a positive response from you and feel in myself that this is more accurate (and more in line with my personal beliefs about relationships). The next time I tell the story, I find myself recalling both my responsibility and my neighbor's. Soon this story has changed from a tale of hero-takes-on-evil to a tale of two-human-beings-with-different-viewpoints. My next interaction with my neighbor is bound to be different.

Place, or "situation," is the final piece of context examined through NI.[141] Where sociality attends more to intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions, place is about both the "specific concrete physical and topological boundaries"[142] and the specific aspects of the cultural situation bound to that location.[143] There are ways in which all experience is affected, even caused, by particularities of location.

I would argue that there are times when the line between "sociality" and "place" is somewhat blurred. To return to the previous example, as I tell the story of conflict with my neighbor, the way I see myself and my neighbor, the reasons for our dispute, and what I perceive as the "right thing to do" in similar situations in the future—all of these may depend heavily on our situation/place. Am I in Asbury Seminary student housing, where a culture of "getting along" and "community spirit" is emphasized? Am

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[140] Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods,* 8.

[141] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 17, 20, 41.

[142] Ibid., 51.

[143] See Susanne Garvis, *Narrative Constellations: Exploring Lived Experience in Education* (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2015), 12. See also Clandinin and Connellly, *Narrative Inquiry,* 50.

I in Detroit, Michigan, where a culture of "standing up for yourself" and "independence" is emphasized? Am I in Corfu, Greece, where it is extremely important to be seen as "hospitable" and "easy going," particularly as a foreigner?

There also may be times when "temporality" and "place" overlap, as physical locations produce different experiences at different times, either in history or in the life of an individual. No story of my interaction with a neighbor at Asbury Seminary could have taken place in its early days of the1920s and 1930s, when women did not attend seminary, let alone study there for a PhD in Intercultural Studies. In the 1920s my dispute with a neighbor in Michigan may have been sparked by insecurity at the number of foreign immigrants my Polish neighbor represented.[144] And in that same time period in Corfu it would have been completely inappropriate—a mark against my modesty as a woman—for me to have a sharp public exchange with a neighbor.[145]

These three aspects of **sociality, temporality,** and **place** form the boundaries of a "three dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third."[146] These are sometimes described as the "inward and outward" (sociality and place) and "backward and forward" (temporal) flows of experience.[147]

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[144] Between 1904 and 1925, the Polish population of Detroit alone went from 13,000 people to 115,000. (See Arthur Woodford, *This is Detroit, 1701-2001* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 186.) In the 2011 book *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan,* Craig Fox describes the ways that an influx of blacks from the south and immigrants from Eastern Europe led to a rise in KKK activity in Michigan, peaking in 1925.

[145] See Janine Mills, "Freedom and Power: The Debate over the Position of Greek Women," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 32, no 1 (Jan/Feb 2003): 6, 11.

[146] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 50.

[147] Ibid.

Why Narrative Inquiry?

Statistical analysis of scores and demographics is, without question, valuable. In a way that is simply not possible otherwise, it allows for large-scale patterns to emerge and be understood—it gives an invaluable snapshot of the concrete—the "what" of a situation. Although statistics can sometimes give explanations of the "how" and the "why," Narrative Inquiry is purposefully designed to allow the "what" of statistics to be supported by a "how" and a "why"—it offers a more complete picture by allowing participants to "expand the meaning" of the numerical data that represent them.[148] Furthermore, like many qualitative methods of research, Narrative Inquiry allows for the type of understanding I was seeking–my goal in this work was not to create "statistical generalization," but to find, understand, and amplify what missionaries are saying.[149] In other words, my goal is to look at these stories of the self-reported journey of resilience, not to prove some kind of statistical hypothesis about who is or isn't resilient.[150]

Narrative Inquiry is a helpful lens for examining missionary resilience through the narratives found in the Resilient Missionary Study for multiple reasons. First of all, NI is fundamentally about looking at experiences, and the interview questions which evoked

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[148] Clandinin, *Handbook*, 5, 16, 20.

[149] See Robert Wuthnow, "Taking Talk Seriously: Religious Discourse As Social Practice," *Journal For the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, No. 1, (March 2011), 6.

[150] Wuthnow, 8, 9.

these narratives are both implicitly and explicitly seeking to understand missionaries'

experiences.[151]   Secondly, the stories in question here fit very naturally into the

Narrative Inquiry triad: Missionaries' stories are fundamentally rooted in the places in

which they happen. Because these questions asked missionaries to examine and

describe change and transformation in their lives, their stories have inherent internal

temporal continuity—they are descriptions of the interplay of past, present, and future.

And the second and third question threads specifically invite narratives of interpersonal

and intrapersonal sociality.

Importantly for those like me who desire for this inquiry to result in actual

change in the actual world, the goals of NI are highly practical. The aim of Narrative

Inquiry is not just theoretical or philosophical understanding: Narrative Inquiry holds

transformation in mind because through story, our past and present actually affect our

future.[152] Using NI opens the possibility of change: Missionaries may learn to tell

themselves different stories, to view their existing stories in a new light, or to find new

stories that make sense of their experience. As they examine their resilience in new

ways, even that act of examination may make them more resilient.[153] And that is only

the benefit for the individual—a broader look at the stories of missionaries that brings

together dominant themes and their patterns has transformative potential for the

broader missionary world.

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[151] See Wuthnow, 3, 7, 9.

[152] Clandinin, *Handbook*, 40.

[153] In fact, multiple interviewees contacted Mr. Whiteman afterward to express gratitude for the opportunity to think about their resilience in this way, because even the act of telling their story was helpful to them.

Additionally, I believe that in his introductory videos Mr. Whiteman has already placed this research in the realm of Narrative Inquiry by enfolding it in his own narrative of human resilience as the partaking of Divine Resilience and of the kintsugi metaphor. In some ways, simply referring to missionaries' resilience and inviting them to look at their experiences through this lens is an invitation to create and be created by narratives of resilience. All this, then, made Narrative Inquiry not just **one** appropriate way to look at this data, but the **best** way to examine these stories of missionaries' growth in resilience.

Ultimately, I decided this was the best way to analyze this data because Narrative Inquiry always keeps the **people** in mind.[154] Behind each of these stories is a beloved human being—a missionary who has shared their heart because they have discovered resilience in their own life that they want to share with the world. This framework honors them. It honors their determination, their brokenness, their growth, their healing, and their courage in allowing themselves to be known in all of that. Narrative Inquiry itself honors the person behind and within the story.

Data Analysis

In examining this data set using Narrative Inquiry, the primary tool I used for my process of inductive coding was Atlas.ti software.[155] Although each of the three question blocks were created separately, I treated them as one arc—the elements of a

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[154] Clandinin, *Handbook*, 7, 41,42.

[155] I also used Numbers charts and a lot of scrap paper to try to visualize patterns.

missionary's story of resilience. This meant that all coding was done considering one set of answers by a missionary as a unit.[156] I approached the stories through the lenses of Narrative Inquiry in order to do thematic narrative analysis.[157]

I began by reading through 25 randomly chosen answers (half that I had read before, half that I had not, distributed evenly through the different CD-RISC score groups). I identified all the themes I could see in these 25 answers and created an initial code book. The code book was originally organized into sections according to the 3 lenses of Narrative Inquiry, plus some additional codes that I was just curious about, such as peoples' attitudes toward adversity and whether their stories showed protective factors, responsive factors, or both. Eventually most of these codes were rolled into one of the NI lenses.

As I was coding, I quickly realized that I would need to create two new categories, or lenses, of Narrative Inquiry: God/Relationship with God,[158] and Both Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Interactions.[159] Additionally, I edited the codes within the codebook as I went along, and as I updated the code book I went back over the data.

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[156] Previous analysis of these questions was done according to the question block it belonged to, allowing for tracing themes through all of Question Block 1, but not through individuals' stories.

"Narrative study relies on (and sometimes has to excavate) extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units…" Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods,* 12.

[157] Thematic analysis in this case is a focus on content, but, unlike grounded theory, "narrative scholars keep a story "intact." Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods,* 53.

[158] See Chapter 9.

[159] See Chapter 7.

As I was working on the Temporality chapter,[160] I realized that I was going to be drawing from the work of Dr. Dan McAdams and his team of researchers, so I did additional research into his concepts of how identity is connected to the stories we tell[161] and "redemption sequences"/"contamination sequences" (especially as a correlate of resilience).[162] As I began to write the Place chapter,[163] I realized that I needed to break some of the larger categories down into smaller categories, and I re-coded those answers which had previously just been labeled as "adversity."

Once all data had been coded, I used Atlas.ti to get a sense of code frequency. I then used the Co-Occurrence tools to analyze demographic patterns within the data. Although I initially compared all demographic patterns that I had access to, an initial evaluation led me to narrow my scope. First I chose those categories which seemed both to contain enough people to draw some valid conclusions and which evidenced clear trends. Eventually I took out some categories that seemed like they would be better examined in a research paper (such as field status). This thinning left me with the following demographic categories: gender, years of field experience, generation/

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[160] See Chapter 4.

[161] Dan McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich, *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006).

See also McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, xiii, 62, 71, 74.

[162] See McAdams, et al., "When Bad Things Turn Good and Good Things Turn Bad: Sequences of Redemption and Contamination in Life Narrative and their Relation to Psychosocial Adaptation in Midlife Adults and in Students," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27, no 4 (April 1, 2001).

[163] See Chapter 5.

age, number of fields of service, and CD-RISC score group.[164] I did further analysis

during the writing process to ascertain whether patterns existed in these areas.

In accordance with the Narrative Inquiry framework,[165] I had originally intended

to share my work with the missionary community as I was writing in order to solicit

feedback. I was unable to do this at a large scale, but was able to seek input from the

missionary community in three ways: First of all, throughout the process I have been in

informal conversation with missionaries, former missionaries, mission agency staff (my

own and others), and other people engaged in member care. Secondly, after

undertaking the preliminary analysis, I presented my findings at the annual meeting of

the American Society of Missiology.[166] Subsequently, I continued to analyze patterns

within the data.

Finally, I presented a brief summary of my dissertation, along with the chapter

on Temporality (Chapter 4) at the Pre-Conference event for the People Care and

Development track for the MissioNexus Mission Leaders Conference.[167] Although

Hurricane Ian meant that I had to do this presentation by pre-recorded video, and the

group who saw it was much smaller than the number anticipated, it was well received.

Several people told Geoff (who was present in-person) that my findings resonated with

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[164] This was an important aspect of this dissertation, as the original preliminary analysis did not include demographics and use of themes.

[165] See Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 60.

[166] Kristina Whiteman, "A Treasured History: Listening to and Learning from Global Workers' Stories of Resilience" (presentation, annual meeting of the American Society of Missiology, Notre Dame, IN, June 18, 2022).

[167] Kristina Whiteman, "A Treasured History: Listening to and Learning from Global Workers' Stories of Resilience" (presentation, People Care and Development track Pre-Conference Event, MissioNexus Mission Leaders Conference, Orlando, FL, September 28, 2022).

Slides and ancillary materials available at: https://resilient-global-worker.ck.page/8364d52dec

them. Also, at least two other presentations at MissioNexus directly referred to my

presentation and the value of looking at resilience for missionaries.[168]

Author's Biases and Mitigation

I assumed from the beginning of this project (as in, from the time that Mr.

Whiteman was creating his model of resilience) that resilience is dynamic, rather than

static. This assumption underlies both the original study and my own analysis. Since

those days, I have read many articles (see literature review) describing resilience as

dynamic. I was careful, in evaluating these stories, to keep an eye out for the counter-

narrative that resilience was not perceived as dynamic by missionaries. Looking for

counter-narratives, acknowledging them and examining them has been an important

way to lessen the impact of my own biases on this project.

Because I had already examined some of the data for this dissertation ahead of

time, I was well aware of the possibility that my own analysis would be skewed by Mr.

Whiteman's construct of the "God/Self/Others" model of growth in resilience. One of

the ways that I aimed to correct for this bias was to choose a clear method for my data

analysis in the Narrative Inquiry framework. By initially limiting myself to the categories

of Narrative Inquiry, I was able to alleviate this bias without feeling like I had to go

against the initial findings in order to do something "new." Additionally, the use of

Narrative Inquiry, with its direct acknowledgment that this method is a co-construction

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[168] Sears, "Top Reasons for Missionary Attrition."

Rocky Tyler, "Conflict Incompetence and the Costs No One Ever Talks About" (presentation, MissioNexus Mission Leaders Conference, Orlando, FL, September 29, 2022).

—between the original interview questions, the stories missionaries told in response, and my own analysis—was an attempt to acknowledge that I play a part in the results of this analysis.

Narrative Inquiry always includes a relationship between the researcher and the researched,[169] and this research is no exception. Throughout the process of analyzing, thinking, and writing about this set of stories, I have heard other stories. I have been officially working in missionary care for the last three years, un-officially for much longer. I have many friends who are missionaries or former missionaries. Because of this personal and professional experience, I have heard the stories that these dear ones do not put into their supporter newsletters. I have wept with friends who feel like failures because they left the field early, and I have rejoiced with friends who have discovered that they can bounce back and return to ministry with greater love for themselves and others than they would have without being broken. I have raged at the incompetence of organizations, at the ways mission leadership wounds and the ways that I myself fall short of the best that missionaries deserve. I have spent my own dark nights wondering if this systemized spread of the Good News is indeed good for those who go forth. But through this research, and through relationships with missionaries, I have come out holding the tension between grief and hope. This is my biggest "bias": I have come to actually believe and put into practice the conclusions you will see in the following pages.

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[169] Clandinin, Handbook, 9.

Methodological Limitations

There are obvious limitations to working with a secondary data set. The biggest, in my opinion, is that I did not have control over the questions that were asked. Mr. Whiteman's work was excellent, but I would be interested in hearing what missionaries' responses would be to more broad open-ended questions about their growth in resilience.[170]   However, I believe that the treasure present in the stories these questions evoked is more than enough to overcome any differences in how I myself might have phrased things.

Narrative Inquiry itself has both limitations and benefits. A "danger" of Narrative Inquiry is that it acknowledges the "tentative and variable nature of knowledge."[171] At every step, interpretation is required,[172] which means that epistemic humility is absolutely key to its proper practice. I have made it my goal to approach this research with exactly this attitude, knowing that there are real limits to my own empathetic and analytical skills. These are not my stories; I cannot come in with my own agenda.[173] Instead, I have sought to collaborate with missionaries,[174] understanding that my work gives me a part in the narrative,[175] but that my part is to listen, to understand, and to amplify their voices.

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[170] This is something I hope to address in longitudinal research.

[171] Clandinin, *Handbook*, 25. See also 46.

[172] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 31.

[173] Ibid., 45.

[174] Ibid., 20.

[175] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 61-62. Clandinin, *Handbook*, 12, 14, 69-70.

Demographics

In terms of demographics, the group which chose to participate in the written interview was diverse in a manner similar to the survey group. The ages of interview participants ranged from 23-75, with a mean of 47. The reported years of service of interview participants ranged from 1-48, with a mean of 14. Interview participants were more likely to be female than male (69.64%).[176] Missionaries served in 19 UN Regions and held citizenship in 15. Interview participants showed a similar range in CD-RISC scores to those who participated in the survey: LOWEST, 6 participants; LOW, 15 participants; AVERAGE, 169 participants; HIGH, 42 participants, and HIGHEST, 15 participants.

Generally speaking, the demographics on the written interview were very similar to those of the survey portion of the RGWS. They were overall a very experienced group, with 62.75% having served for more than 10 years in the field and an additional 25.10% having served at least 5 years in the field. The largest group of respondents had served for between 10 and 19 years (n=80, 32.39%). Participants' ages averaged slightly higher than the ages of survey participants, with Gen-X[177] (n= 98, 39.68%) as

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[176] This is congruent with the overall missionary population.

[177] Those born between 1965 and 1980.

the largest group, followed by Boomers[178] (n= 86, 34.82%) and Millennials[179] (n= 56, 22.67%).

Those who wrote interviews fell into a normal distribution in terms of CD-RISC score,[180] with the majority (n=169, 68.42%) falling in the Average category. More interviewees fell into the Highest/High score categories (n= 57, 23.07%) than the Lowest/Low categories (n=21), which is perhaps to be expected from a group of people volunteering to tell their stories of resilience. This does not mean, however, that the Lowest/Low categories were absent; 8.50% of respondents were in this group.

When it came to marital status and gender, this group was representative of global missionary numbers: 69.64% (n=172) were women, and 29.55% (n=73) were men. There were strong disparities between genders in terms of marital status: 80.82% (n=59) of male respondents were married, but only 53.49% (n=92) of women were married; 36.05% of the women (n=92) were single, but only 4.11% of men (n=3) were single.

Similarly to the survey portion, denominational affiliation was highly varied, with 25 denominations or denominational groups represented. A quarter of interviewees (n=62, 25.10%) labeled themselves as Nondenominational. The next largest groups were Baptists (n=41, 16.6%), Methodists (n=31, 12.55%), Pentecostals (n=23, 9.31%),

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[178] Those born between 1946 and 1964.

[179] Those born between 1981 and 1996.

[180] Participant responses to the initial survey included the standardized CD-RISC (Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale). As part of initial analysis of the RGWS, these scores were converted to z-scores and categorized by number of standard deviations from the mean: Lowest CD-RISC (-2), Low CD-RISC (-1), Average CD-RISC (0), High CD-RISC (+1), Highest CD-RISC (+2).

and Nondenominational Evangelicals (n=22, 8.91%). The vast majority of respondents (n=242, 97.98%) belong to a Protestant denomination.

Size of agency with which interviewees worked varied from "independent" to more than 1,000 missionaries. The largest number were from agencies with 200-499 missionaries (n=52, 21.05%). Almost equal numbers came from agencies with more than 1,000 missionaries (n=40, 16.19%) and those with fewer than 24 missionaries (n=38, 15.38%). Interestingly, the number of those working independently (n=20, 8.10%) is similarly comparable to the number of those working with organizations of 500-999 missionaries (n=22, 8.91%).

Ministry function data was also included in this analysis. Each of the options for ministry type was chosen at least 28.74% (n=71) of the time. Training/Education (n=129, 52.23%) was the most common choice, followed by Social/Community Work (n=111, 44.94%) and Support of Existing Local/National Churches (n=88, 35.63%).

Participants came from a similar range of passport regions, with participants from North America (n=175, 70.85%) making up a clear majority and Australia/New Zealand (n=29, 11.74%), and Northern Europe (n=19, 7.69%) following. They served in a wide variety of UN Regions;[181] Eastern Africa (n=33, 13.36%), South America (n=30, 12.15%), Southeastern Asia (n=25, 10.12%) and Eastern Asia (n=23, 9.31%) were the most common primary areas of service. The majority of interviewees (n=138, 55.87%) worked only in one country, while 29.15% (n=72) reported working in two countries, and 14.57% (n=36) worked in more than two countries. In terms of secondary regions

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[181] Only Micronesia and Polynesia were not represented.

of service, missionaries were in a wide variety of countries, with the largest group listing multiple countries as their secondary regions.

The final demographic data collected was current field status. The majority of those missionaries responding to the written interview were still working cross-culturally (n= 192, 77.73%). Slightly more than a fifth of respondents (n=54, 21.86%) reported having left the field but returned, often having switched locations or organizations (n=42, 17.00%). Among respondents, almost a fifth (n=45, 18.22%) left the field (whether they returned or not) earlier than they had planned/expected, due to some negative circumstance.

Summary Discussion of Demographic Information

The group of missionaries who participated in the written interview portion of the Resilient Missionary Study were highly varied in some ways, but not in others. The most glaring examples of homogeneity are passport country and Christian Tradition affiliation. Because a limitation of the RMS was fluency in English, and because the original snowball method started with contacts in North America, these top regions are perhaps to be expected; in the future, it would be beneficial to translate the RMS into languages other than English (the CD-RISC has been translated into over 90 languages), in order to gather data that is more varied. Additionally, an effort should be made in future versions of the RMS to reach out to Catholic and Orthodox missionaries; as it is, some of the conclusions of this analysis may resonate most fully with Protestant missionaries.

Field status is worth noting: The majority of respondents were still in the thick of it rather than reflecting on their careers having returned to their passport countries. They were reporting their experiences of resilience as missionaries while engaged in that work. It is also interesting to note the high number of individuals who left their country of service or organization under negative circumstances, along with the high number of missionaries who switched organizations or countries of service.[182]

Psychographics

Three additional categories of psychographic data were included in this analysis: Top Stressors, Top Supports, and Desired Resources.

In the first category, participants in the written interview portion were given 12 options for resources and asked to report their top type of Desired Resource. The highest number reported wanting resources in the form of Books (n=56, 22.67%), followed by Individual (n=40, 16.19%), Podcasts (n=34, 13.77%), and Community (n=33, 13.36%). Because this question of type (rather than subject) of Desired Resource was asked only on the interview portion of the RMS, it is impossible to compare it with the survey results.

In the RMS survey portion, participants were asked to rank their top three stressors from a list. For the purposes of this analysis, all three stressors listed as a Top Stress by participants were coded. For those who participated in the Written

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[182] This seems particularly salient for those who work in missionary care—it may be that finding the right place with the right organization and offering appropriate debriefing and assistance to those who leave prematurely because of negative events is key to assisting longevity of career.

Interview, the most commonly occurring Top Stress was Conflict With Co-workers

(n=111, 44.94%), followed by Cultural Stress (n=93, 37.65%) and Being Overworked

(n=73, 29.55%). Slightly lower, but still with a full quarter of participants reporting them

as Top Stresses were Feeling Inadequate (n=65, 26.32%) and Financial Pressure (n=64,

25.91%). Eighty-seven people (35.22%) wrote in additional stressors, with Unrealized

Goals (n=29, 11.74%) and Safety (n=22, 8.91%) as the most frequently written in

stressors. Though the order was slightly different, these are the same Top Stressors

found in the survey portion of the RMS.[183]

Interestingly, when it comes to Top Supports, missionaries listed Friendship with

Co-workers most highly (n=151, 61.13%), followed closely by Spouse/Children (n=147,

59.51%). Friendship with Nationals (n=105, 42.51%), Spiritual Disciplines (n=66,

26.72%), and Moral Support from Home (n=58, 23.48%) rounded out the top five

Supports. There were far fewer write-ins (n=15, 6.07%) in the Top Supports, and none

had more than eight participants (3.24%). Again, though the order is slightly different,

these top three Supports are the same between the survey and interview portions of

the RMS.[184]

Summary Discussion of Psychographic Information

It may be helpful to compare these Stresses, Supports, and Desired Resources

across the Demographic categories. It would be interesting to know whether one

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[183] Whiteman, et al., "How Missionaries Become Resilient," 71.

[184] Ibid.

gender, marital status, ministry type, etc. experiences any of these needs to a greater or lesser degree. However, that will need to be a future project, as it is outside the structure of this dissertation.

Although the type of Desired Resource is useful data for those who are currently producing training and support materials for missionaries, it may seem less salient to understanding the stories that missionaries tell. However, it is notable that each of the top Desired Resources involves either telling or receiving stories, either individually (such as in individual counseling) or in a group/public setting (such as a book on dealing with grief and loss). Even this seemingly unrelated psychographic data points to the desire to make sense of the world through narrative.

When one looks down the list of Top Stresses and Supports, it is clear that **relationships** are key for missionaries. In fact, missionaries report the exact same relationship—Friendship with Co-workers—as both their Top Stress and Top Support! All the other most frequently ranked Supports are relational, with others or with God. I would argue that the most frequently ranked Stresses also connect to relationship: Being Overworked may relate to one's relationship with oneself or with one's organization, team, or boss. Cultural Stress is about relationship to a group of people or a location. Feeling Inadequate is deeply rooted in one's relationship to self. Even Financial Pressure, which may connect to the difficulty of cultivating financially supportive relationships, or of unreasonable expectations, or of organizational culture, can be traced back to relationships. For those who attend to the experiences of missionaries and desire to increase their resilience, there is an obvious need to nurture

good relationships with God, self, and others,[185] and to train in skills to deal with

relational stress and conflict in ways that build rather than destroy.

Methodology Concluding Summary

For this dissertation, I have done a full analysis of the Resilient Missionary

Study: Written Interview. Using Atlas.ti software, I have examined the themes found in

each person's story as a whole, coded these stories, ascertained what themes are

prevalent, and done a demographic analysis of those main motifs. In this chapter, I

have provided a summary of the demographic and psychographic information for the

missionaries who wrote these interviews.

All this has been done in the framework of Narrative Inquiry—I have read these

missionaries' stories with the goal of listening to them, understanding them, and

amplifying their voices. The following chapters are the fruit of this analysis. They are

the answer to the question: **How do missionaries express their experience of the**

journey toward greater resilience?

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[185] This triad of relationships has been central to Geoff Whiteman's original work in creating a model of resilience and in the previous partial analysis of the RGWS data.

CHAPTER 4:

TEMPORALITY

Introduction

There are times in our lives when we have to realize our past is precisely what it is, and we cannot change it. But we can change the story we tell ourselves about it, and by doing that, we can change the future.[186]
—Eleanor Brown, *The Weird Sisters*

A few years ago, I discovered on Facebook that Jane,[187] a friend from middle

and high school had become Orthodox (like me), and I contacted her to ask about her

story of coming into the Orthodox Church. The first thing Jane wrote to me was, "I was

surprised to see that you joined the Orthodox Church, because you told me when we

were in high school that Catholics (like my family and I were) aren't real Christians."

I was shocked—surely I had not ever said such a thing! I assured her that I did,

indeed, believe that Catholics (including our family's best friends, some of my mentors

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[186] Eleanor Brown, *The Weird Sisters* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2011), 337.

[187] Not her real name.

in the Faith, and myself for a time) could indeed be Christians. I apologized to her if I had said that to her, and we parted amicably.

This experience came to mind as I was thinking about Temporality, the first of the Narrative Inquiry lenses we will use to explore how missionaries describe their resilience journey. Jane spent the last twenty or so years believing that I looked down on her faith, thinking that I disdained a broad swath of Christian Tradition. It had colored how she saw me, how much she interacted with me, and how willing she was to chat with me when I contacted her. To this day, I'm fairly sure that Jane believes I really did say that about Catholics, and I can't help but think it must still make a difference in what she thinks about me as a person and as an Orthodox Christian. My hope is certainly that what she knows about me now will come to invest her understanding of the past with new and different meanings.

The stories we tell, and the ways we link what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen, help to determine the meanings we make in our lives —this is Temporality. We often think of the ways that the past affects the present, as when we make a decision about a current situation based on a similar experience we have had before, or when we observe a change in our life over time. However, it is also true that as we have a present experience it both builds our store of past meaning-making and creates expectations for the future. Not only, as Brown says above, do we change the future, but we also use a conglomeration of future expectations and present thoughts and feelings to tell a story from the past. We often reframe, nuance, or even change it in light of our audience, our situation, or what we know now. This movement of time and meaning-making is not only one-way, from the past to the

present to the future. Through storytelling, meaning-making is omnidirectional—this is

why I can still hope that Jane's past view of me can be changed.

In this chapter, I will examine two main categories of temporality as seen in

missionaries' stories. First of all, as they talk about their experiences of growing in

resilience over time, missionaries frequently describe attitudes or actions exemplifying

the facets of resilience. As they make meaning from their experiences, both

preventative and responsive aspects are present.

In this process, when missionaries think about their stories as they have

unfolded and are unfolding over time, they used "redemption sequences" or

"contamination sequences" to make meaning. After defining and describing these

additional aspects of missionaries' view of resilience, I will briefly discuss the

demographic analysis for these motifs within this group's narratives.

Secondly, within missionaries' stories there is a set of narrative themes[188] used

most often to describe the ways that their past, present, and future interact in their

movement toward greater resilience. After the section on facets of resilience, this

chapter will outline some of these most commonly seen themes. A brief demographic

analysis will then be provided for Temporality themes in missionaries' stories.

Throughout this chapter and the chapters to come, I have interspersed quotes

of missionaries' own words. It is important to keep top of mind, always, that each

statistic, each trend, each motif that I describe here comes from the voices of real

people, in real situations, with real experiences. These are precious persons who have

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[188] Please note: although within the study of written literature the terms "narrative theme" and "narrative motif" may be differentiated, for the purposes of this dissertation they are intended to be interchangeable; both refer to the overall essence of a concept expressed in various ways but able to be summed up with a shorter phrase representing the gist.

shared their meaning-making with the rest of us, and they deserve to be honored and

listened to.

Facets of Resilience

One of the key findings for this research is that when missionaries describe their

movement toward greater resilience, they talk about **both protective and responsive**

aspects (n=227, 91.90%).[189] By "protective aspects" of resilience, I mean those things

that missionaries can do ahead of time to face adversity better—ways they can

experience more, deeper, worse things and yet carry on with little or no interruption to

their daily life. (Grit is an example of a protective aspect of resilience.) By "responsive

aspects" of resilience, I mean those things missionaries can do to bounce back when

they have been broken by adversity—ways they can heal, reframe, renew, and function

as well as (or even better than) they did before:[190]

> *As I have become more aware of my brokenness, as missions has stretched and*
> *broken me, and as I have known God's healing in the pain, I have become less*
> *focussed on striving for perfection in life and ministry, and more focussed on my*
> *relationship with God and with others. I have learnt a greater trust and*
> *dependence on God, as I have become less dependent on myself. I have learnt*
> *my place before God, and become less focussed on what I can do for Him on*

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[189] A much smaller number of missionaries described only protective factors (n=8, 3.24%) or only responsive factors (n=16, 6.48%). Only two stories from missionaries did not mention specific protective factors, responsive factors, or both.

[190] In this first chapter, it seems important to point out once again that the goal of this dissertation is to examine stories. I am making the claim that missionaries are moving through redemption sequences and the Resilience Cycle because that is what I see in their stories. I am not making a statistical claim about how many missionaries are or are not resilient. Although I believe that many of these themes and ideas will resonate with many missionaries, all percentages should be understood as reflections of what these missionaries say in their narratives rather than absolute claims about all missionaries everywhere.

the mission field and more and more aware of what He does in me through my experience on the field.[191]

Missionaries frequently refer to the fact that their resilience is dynamic; they perceive it as a skill in which they have grown. In fact, just over 40% of them (n=102, 41.3%) make direct statements indicating that they have grown more resilient over time. These statements often go with an acknowledgement that, although at the time they did not see the "good fruit" in adversity and brokenness, through the temporal process they now look back on difficult and even traumatic events with eyes that see purpose in the pain: *"Adversity is the lesson of God to me, making me stronger and more resilient."*[192]

In addition to these direct mentions of resilience as a changing, growing part of their lives, missionaries (n=227, 91.90%) also include descriptions of both aspects of resilience to describe what I think of as the Resilience Cycle:

- They experience an adversity that really breaks them.
- They respond to it in ways that allow them to bounce back.
- They discover that the process of bouncing back has increased their ability to overcome or move through later adversity, by giving them greater or new protective traits.
- They repeat the cycle, going from responsive to greater protective traits, to greater responsive traits, to even greater protective traits.

In this sense, missionaries' resilience is like a spiral staircase—although they may feel like they are constantly seeing the same walls, they are moving higher and gaining a new perspective even in repeated adversity: *"Earlier adversity helped to identify the stages I went through in myself and to take control of of strategies to help."*[193]

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[191] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q57)

[192] Western Asian serving in Western Asia for 27 years. (Q8)

[193] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Africa for 4 years. (Q126)

Both protective and responsive aspects of resilience show up in many missionaries' stories of growth in resilience. This commonality does not, however, mean that all missionaries are thinking about their resilience in the same way. Some missionaries (n=40, 16.19%), in spite of the way that the written interview was set up with Mr. Whiteman's introductory videos, mistake protective facets of resilience for resilience as a whole. For example, they may refer to having a "dogged stick-to-it/don't-give-up attitude"[194] as their main (or only) support in this journey. At the same time, 85% (n=34) of the missionaries who mistake protective factors for resilience as a whole describe both protective and responsive factors in their stories of resilience. So, although they may not be thinking about it in the same way, they are certainly still experiencing it very similarly to those who think about resilience in a more holistic way.

As missionaries are making meaning of their experiences through the Resilience Cycle, they frequently express this experience through "redemption sequences" (n=216, 87.45%). A redemption sequence[195] is a story feature in which a negative experience is acknowledged, but later in the story the teller expresses that the negative has been redeemed in some way by a later experience or later processing. In other research, redemption sequences have been linked to higher rates of well-being and generativity;[196] they are an important part of many meaning-making life-narratives.

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[194] North American serving in Western Africa for 11 years. (Q95)

[195] McAdams, *The Redemptive Self*, xiv.

Jack Bauer, Dan McAdams, and Jennifer Pals, "Narrative Identity and Eudaimonic Well-Being," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 2008): 5.

See also Dan McAdams, et al., "When Bad Things Turn Good."

[196] Bauer, McAdams, and Pals, "Narrative Identity," 85. McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, xiv, xvi.

Often such stories include descriptions of what adversity has taught someone, growth that has happened because of adversity, or some other reframing of adversity as leading to a positive outcome:

> *After a recent time of difficulty, the Lord gave me two images. One essentially reinforced my need to continually abide in Him like a branch on a vine. The other was of a sunflower growing out from under a port-a-potty. This was real life growing into something beautiful in spite of and maybe because of the difficulty of where it was placed. Lots of ideas came out of this, but one was that God helps us grow even in the 'crap.' He helps us filter out the negative and gives us good, lush nutrients to continue to grow even in the midst of difficulty. And the way we grow isn't just mediocre in all of the difficulties, but it produces something beautiful that brings him glory. So, my prayer is that as I abide in him and seek his wisdom for my difficulties, that I might bring him glory in the muck in which I am planted.[197]*

This is not to say, however, that every missionary story contains only redemption sequences, and everything always turns out well immediately. Some missionaries were still in the thick of it—still struggling to find the meaning in their current suffering.[198] Still others described "contamination sequences" in their stories (n=22, 8.91%). As you might expect, contamination sequences (which have been linked with lower well-being and generativity) are essentially the opposite of redemption sequences.[199] In such a narrative, the story-teller initially talks about how good something was, how well they were doing, how blessed they were, or some similar positive theme. Then the story turns to how their life changed negatively after some experience:

> *My approach to ministry has been severely tested since coming to the field. I thought I had a pretty good idea of my philosophy of ministry. However, everything I thought I knew has been turned upside down. My relationship was God has suffered. I've questioned my call, His plan for world evangelization, whether He "hears" my/our prayers, and even beliefs about who I thought He*

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[197] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 29 years. (Q94)

[198] See discussion in Interaction, Chapter 6.

[199] Bauer, McAdams, and Pals, "Narrative Identity," 85. McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 183.

was.…I'm 45 years old and really questioning who I am, what's my purpose, and where I want to be in the next 20 years. More confusingly, I'm really wrestling with who I've been the past 23 years.[200]

It is notable that, although the presence of these contamination sequences is undeniable, fourteen out of the twenty-two stories containing contamination sequences also included redemption sequences. When I see this overlap in their stories, the only conclusion I can make is that the ways in which missionaries make meaning from their experiences is truly complex, involving all the facets of resilience: protective and responsive factors, redemptive and contaminative sequences.

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[200] North American serving in Southern Europe for 2 years. (Q25)

Demographic Analysis: Facets of Resilience

There were several interesting patterns when I looked at these facets of resilience in terms of the demographic categories.[201] As will be the case in each chapter, these patterns will be enumerated below. Each general demographic category in which a trend can be seen is outlined in this analysis.

Length of Service

The positive narrative themes (both aspects of resilience, resilience cycle, redemption sequence) all showed general trends upward in terms of missionaries' years in the field. On the other hand, the use of contamination sequences went down as missionaries were more experienced. I suspect that this is due to a key feature of resilience–that it grows over time. The longer people have in the field, the more opportunities they have to complete redemption sequences and to grow more resilient through full Resilience Cycles.

Age
There was also a strong correlation between the positive facets of resilience and a missionary's age. In terms of completing Resilience Cycles and describing both protective and responsive aspects of resilience, there was a general trend upward with age. There was a direct correlation between age and missionaries' use of redemption sequences and a direct negative correlation between age and missionaries' use of

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[201] A full analysis was done for each theme, comparing it to each category of demographic data to look for trends. Only clear trends will be reported in this dissertation. For more information on the demographic analysis, contact the author at Kriss@ResilientGlobalWorker.org.

contamination sequences—the older a missionary was, the more likely they were to describe how things had gone from bad to good, and the less likely they were to describe how things had gone from good to bad. Given the initial findings of the Resilient Global Worker Study that Age is significantly correlated to higher scores on resilience measurements, this makes sense. Older missionaries have had time (like those who have been in the field longer) to complete Resilience Cycles and to both grow in resilience and to reflect on that growth.

CD RISC Score Group

Unsurprisingly, these themes related to the facets of resilience also all showed connections to missionaries' CD-RISC scores. Missionaries in all but the Lowest (-2 SD) score group reported the Resilience Cycle more than 91% of the time. There was a near-direct correlation between CD-RISC scores and descriptions of redemption sequences,[202] and there was a direct negative correlation between use of contamination sequences and CD-RISC score for these missionaries.

In summary, the contrast between these results across the demographic categories for redemption and contamination sequences is particularly notable because "people's lives and their life stories do not always line up well, and strong connections between different kinds of measures in Psychology…are often difficult to find."[203] It seems significant, then, that in the case of the Resilient Missionary Study there are clear indicators that what people are saying about their lives—even in their

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[202] Those in the Lowest group, at 83.33%, were slightly more likely to describe redemption sequences than those in the Low group, at 80%.

[203] Dan McAdams, personal email correspondence, August 16, 2022.

temporal reframing—lines up with what one would expect. **Older, more experienced missionaries who score higher on resilience measurements are more likely to describe the Resilience Cycle using redemption sequences.**

Gender

Women were more likely than men to describe all positive facets of resilience. When it came to the Resilience Cycle and redemption sequences, women were 8% more likely than men to use these motifs. Men, on the other hand, were almost 5% more likely than women were to use contamination sequences in their stories. Because there is no statistically significant difference in CD-RISC score between men and women, this gender difference likely indicates differences in the way men and women tell stories or express their experiences rather than showing that men are less likely to experience the positive aspects of resilience and more likely to experience contamination sequences.

Additional Notes on Contamination Sequences

When I saw the demographic trends for redemption and contamination sequences, I was interested to see if they were also connected to some themes I had taken note of outside of Temporality. What I noticed was that contamination sequences were frequently associated with higher levels of acute stress, burnout, grief,

Contamination Sequence   Redemption Sequence
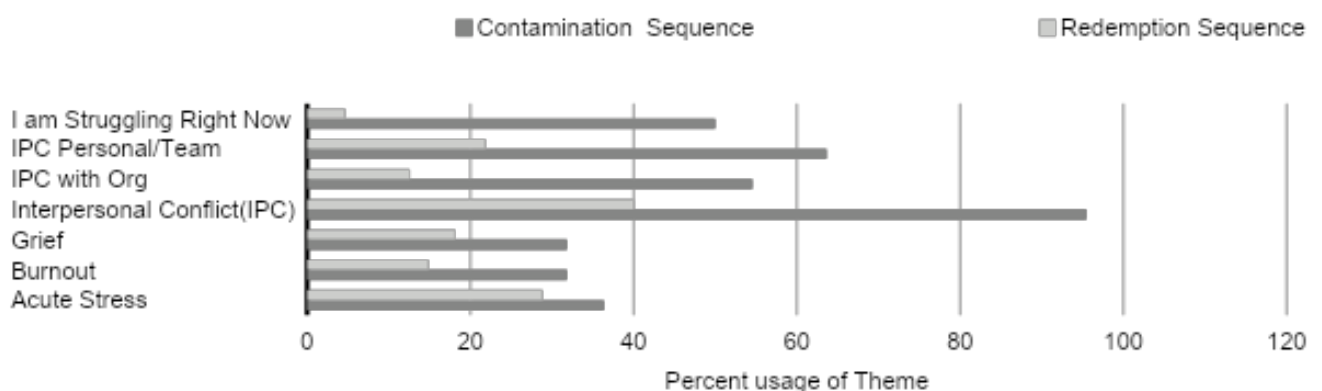
interpersonal conflict (IPC), and descriptions of currently struggling (see chart below).

The presence of these negative story-attributes further reinforces the idea that

missionaries whose stories include contamination sequences are genuinely struggling

more in their real lives.

Temporal Narrative Themes

"My life has changed as I've realised that I don't actually have to have it all together. It is okay to be broken and that God uses broken vessels, so that we can shine out of His Glory and not from ourselves. I think initially we tend to think of missionaries as having it all together but in reality we are the broken ones that God is working on and through. I've become much more aware that our ministry is made up of broken people and that we are all completely dependent on God."[204]

As missionaries tell their stories of growing in resilience, they describe the interplay of past, present, and future using a variety of narrative themes. In each case, these themes are what missionaries use to make or find meaning in their experiences. Since Mr. Whiteman was explicit about the central metaphor of kintsugi, I expected to see this temporal theme frequently. Some missionaries (n=36, 14.57%) did utilize the central metaphor of kintsugi as they describe their change over time, but many others made meaning in other ways. I found thirteen total narrative themes[205] relating to this lens of Narrative Inquiry, six of which were mentioned by missionaries 24% or more of the time.

Overall, missionaries frequently talk about their growth in resilience as a positive journey (n=213, 86.23%), either using the specific word "journey" or describing growth

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[204] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q7)

[205] Themes not frequent enough to analyze here:
- I gained a better understanding of the host culture over time (21.86%)
- As I've become older, I've become wiser (15.38%)
- Direct mention of Kintsugi (14.57%)
- I am experiencing/have experienced the same things as the people I serve, giving me insight (13.77%)
- I plan to build on the adversity I am currently experiencing (10.93%)
- The adversity I faced built my skills for my post-field work (7.29%)
- Direct mentions of "growth through failure" (2.83%)

in resilience as a long-term path or movement. They believe that becoming more

resilient takes time, and they see the course of change over time as a necessary part of

the process. They know that they are more resilient today than they were in the past,

and they look forward in hope to a trajectory of even greater resilience:

> *I began to practice mindfulness; The whole experience of pain has been an essential source of my resilience to face new adversity. I am aware that it could have been the opposite and am so grateful God has led me to this journey.*[206]

Missionaries say that they have built on past adversities (n=183, 74.09%) as

they grow more resilient, gaining skills through those experiences for the work they are

currently doing (n=190, 76.92%). Part of the meaning in what they have experienced,

often even before entering the field, is that it has prepared them. They know that the

ministry they are undertaking is possible in great part through the suffering that they

have borne before, and the ability to give to others through ministry gives that pain

meaning:

> *During my time of experiencing compassion fatigue, I really questioned God and my relationship with him was at a serious low point….Now I understand that bringing healing and restoration to a broken world is God's work. He invites me to participate, but it is not my responsibility. This shift in thinking did wonders for my relationship with God as I no longer saw him as a mean God that called me into a situation where he knew I was going to get hurt, but as a loving God who wanted me to see beauty in brokenness and who loved and cared for me. This has given me margin to be more available to others in a healthy way, I have more compassion, time and love for people.*[207]

Missionaries also point to specific ways that they have changed over time (n=97,

39.27%), clarifying beliefs and changing behaviors along the path. They know that, not

only what they are doing, but also who they are as people, has been affected by their

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[206] North American serving in Melanesia for 18 years. (Q213)

[207] Australian/New Zealander serving in South Asia for 6 years. (Q90)

experiences. As they share the stories of transformation, they acknowledge that their

growth persists into the present (n=129, 52.23%), continuing the move toward ever

greater resilience:

> *I think that the longer you are in ministry, the more you need to change and will change, whether on purpose or just through the circumstances….Of course this is a process and I often need to remind myself of it….My natural tendency is to run away and hide and to try to solve it all on my own. It's not easy for me to ask for help. I have learned and am still learning, that it is OK to ask for help, both from people as from the Lord…. It takes a lot of renewing of the mind to change and I am still changing* [208]

Often an outcome of what they have experienced is greater altruism—a desire to

help others (n=60, 24.29%). Having experienced both protective and responsive facets

of resilience and found their own redemption sequences, missionaries want to help

others along the path to greater resilience. Missionaries know that passing on their

wisdom, letting others benefit from their struggle, also brings meaning to all that has

happened to and through them:

> *We saw that when we were intentional in practice ourselves and with others it helped us claim our identity as dearly loved children of God and also lead us in bringing life giving things into the communities we were a part of (saved and unsaved)….we became involved in propagating them in our organization so that others can use them too! We believe they help us suffer well!*[209]

Demographic Analysis: Themes of Temporality

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[208] Western European serving in Northern Europe for 18 years. (Q103)

[209] North American serving in South Asia for 23 years. (Q82)

Length of Service and Age

There is a connection between the number of years that a missionary served in the field and their use of these Temporality themes: a general trend upward or a direct correlation can be seen for each of these themes. Similarly, the majority of themes have either direct correlations or general trends upward when it comes to age. As was the case with the facets of resilience, my assumption is that by being in the field for a longer time, or being on the planet for a longer time, these missionaries had more ample opportunities to move through the resilience cycle and experience these aspects of Temporality.

In terms of discussing ongoing growth and descriptions of change over time, however, there are variations from the majority. Missionary mentions of ongoing growth and change over time show no age-related pattern. In terms of length of service, the rate of reporting ongoing growth remains the same for the first twenty years in the field but goes down for the last two experience categories. My best guess would be that those who are most experienced may have reached a kind of "plateau" where they have made the changes they will make. Perhaps they do not think of themselves as being in a time of ongoing growth, or the changes they have made over time are not top of mind.

CD-RISC Score Group

As was the case in terms of Age and Experience, direct correlations can be seen between CD-RISC score groups and several of the themes.[210] However, there was no pattern concerning CD-RISC score and missionary descriptions of Change Over Time or Growth in Altruism. Finally, there was a negative correlation between CD-RISC score and these missionaries' stories of continuing growth. As was the case for the difference for Age and Experience, I would assume that this negative correlation could be attributed to missionaries reaching a level of resilience at which they are not experiencing or focusing on continued growth.

Gender

All of the themes in the Temporality lens were used more frequently by women than they were by men, by 4% or more. It it interesting to note that, again, although women and men do not score differently on the CD-RISC, there does seem to be a gendered difference in the way that they describe their experiences, with women being

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[210] True of the themes: Positive Journey, Adversity Built Skills for Current Work, Building on Earlier Adversity.

more likely to recollect and/or include these experiences of Temporality in their

stories.[211]

	% by which Women were more likely to use the theme than Men were
Adversity built skills for current work	4
A Positive Journey	5
Building on earlier adversity	6
My experience made me want to help others	7

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[211] Please note that by "gendered difference," I simply mean that these are differences in women's and men's stories as found in these interviews. The first separate article based on this research that I plan to write is on gender, marital status, and missions. This will undoubtedly refer to sociological and communications scholarship such as Fixmer-Oraiz and Wood's *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, & Culture*, which may give clues as to how much of what we see here is related to the gender of the person speaking; however, for this work that is beyond the scope of my scholarship.

Additionally, I note that although some historical or anthropological works, particularly historical biographies, have been written about women missionaries, this is another area in which the missions community would benefit from additional scholarly work. (See for examples of historical work on women's mission: Shirley Ardoner, Fiona Bowie, and Deborah Kirkwood, eds, *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* and Kathryn Reese Hendershot, *E. Stanley Jones Had a Wife: The Life and Missiological Contributions of Dr. Mabel Lossing Jones, Missionary to India 1878-1978.*)

In a recent database search, I found only three research-based works in the last 10 years specifically focused on issues of women in the mission field.
- One was the aforementioned article by Davis, Thom, and Bowden, which argues that women may be less resilient than men (and which the authors themselves suggest should be treated with caution).
- One was a recent book by Mary Lederleitner based on research with 95 missionary women (*Women in God's Mission: Accepting the Invitation to Serve and Lead).*
- The other (Sue Eenigenburg and Suzy Grumelot, *Sacred Siblings: Valuing One Another for the Great Commission*) focuses on how single missionaries (most of whom are women) and married missionaries can best work together in the field.

Going back 21 years, there was an article by Hall and Duvall on the experiences of married women in missions. There is a clear opening to follow in the footsteps of Robert's *American Women in Mission* (see Bibliography) but from a current, research-based perspective.

Descriptions of Change over time	11
Ongoing growth now	37

Discussion

In this chapter, I have defined and described the facets of resilience and their most common form of expression, the redemption sequence. I have also examined the most common narrative themes related to Temporality. Finally, I have given brief evaluations of the demographic analysis for the facets and the themes, revealing some notable correlations to age, CD-RISC score, gender, marital status, years in the field.

So, what does this mean for missionaries and for those who care about their resilience? I would argue there are three main points to take away from viewing missionaries' stories of their resilience-journeys through the lens of Temporality.

First of all, **missionaries are in the process of becoming resilient.** When we have discussed this research, people from many mission organizations have asked, "How can I be sure that I am picking resilient people to put into the field?" And the answer is…you can't. The goal for sending organizations cannot be to choose the people who are at the top of the stairs, but to support people as they climb. When we start the journey with anyone who will face for the first time the stretch and strain of crossing cultures for the sake of the gospel, we must plan on resilience being something that they grow into, not a trait that they will already possess or a competence they will instantly master. This means that we must think about how to support people in that process, in ways that genuinely build resilience, step-by-step, for the long haul.

Secondly, **we must see redemption sequences for what they are—the balance of lament and joy, of grief and gratitude.** It is enormously tempting to skip to the end, to the ultimate meaning-making we as Christians find in Christ and his

Resurrection. However, just as the story of Redemption includes the suffering of the

Cross, a redemption sequence includes pain. It is impossible, in fact, to move forward

without acknowledging our brokenness. We have to get past the moment where all we

can see is the cross…not by avoiding it but by going through it. It is absolutely critical

to grieve our losses, to repent of our shortcomings, and to own our heartache. To do

otherwise is to skip a step in the story without which we cannot move forward with

authenticity, healing, and hope. Having lamented, we can turn toward gratitude for the

ways that God has redeemed our loss. With the Psalmist, we can go from "*How long,

Lord? Will you forget me forever?*" to "*But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices

in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me*" (Psalm 13).

Finally, many of these missionaries are able themselves to view their

experiences through the lens of Temporality. They see the difficult things that happen

in their lives as part of a process, one which includes spiritual, emotional, and

professional growth. In other words, without denying adversity, these resilient

missionaries' stories of growth show how their mourning is turned into dancing. **These

missionaries know that the past prepares them for the present and the future in a

way that redeems all things.**

CHAPTER 5:

PLACE

Introduction

As a child, I sang a song with this chorus in one of our church musicals:

> Please don't send me to Africa!
> I don't think I've got what it takes.
> I'm just a man, I'm not a Tarzan.
> Don't like lions, gorillas or snakes.
> I'll serve you here in suburbia,
> In my comfortable middle class life.
> But please don't send me out into the bush,
> Where the natives are restless at night![212]

Weird and not-so-vaguely racist tropes aside, for many years this is what I thought kept

people from leaving America for cross-cultural ministry—they are too comfortable in

their suburban lives, and there are too many scary environmental factors to leave that

luxury for foreign climes.

Based on this belief, when I approached Place, our next Narrative Inquiry lens,

my primary focus was initially the "lions, gorillas, or snakes"—what were the

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[212] Scott Wesley Brown, "Please don't send me to Africa," Track 13 on *Out of Africa*. Syntax Creative, WWDL135197-13, 1998, music download.

environmental adversities which missionaries cited as a part of their journey? I was
sure that missionaries' narratives of the path to greater resilience would feature many
stories of overcoming, adapting to, or at least facing harsh climates. And I was right…
to a certain point. What I found on closer examination was a more nuanced
understanding of how Place affects missionaries' stories of the journey toward greater
resilience: Although missionaries face many Place-based adversities, they also
experience Place-based protective and responsive aspects of resilience.

In this chapter, I will first describe what I mean by "Place" as a lens of Narrative
Inquiry, including an explanation of the parameters of this particular narrative-theme
group. Secondly, I will examine Place-based narrative themes that show up in
missionaries' stories; where possible, I will share relevant illustrative quotes in
missionaries' own words. These motifs will then be examined at the level of
demographic analysis. Finally, the chapter will end with a brief discussion of the
importance that Place has for missionaries' experiences of resilience.

Defining and Delimiting Place

Within Narrative Inquiry, Place (also sometimes referred to as Situation) includes
both "specific concrete physical and topological boundaries"[213] and the particularities
of the cultural situation bound to that location.[214] It might be summed up as the

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[213] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry*, 51.

[214] See Susanne Garvis, *Narrative Constellations*, 12.
 See also Clandinin and Connellly, *Narrative Inquiry,* 50.

external context in which missionaries are operating. There are ways in which all

experience is affected, and some experience is caused, by distinctives of Place. This

is certainly true for missionaries, who have left one Place to enter another, and who

must adjust not only to the differences in climate and other physical factors, but also to

the full psycho-social-cultural milieu of a situation—including cultural expectations

based in local cultural values.[215]

Clearly there can be overlap between Interaction[216] and Place. For example, a

missionary's teammates/colleagues are affected by Place (because they're all there

together), but also by Interaction (because they're in relationship). All relationships to

which one has access are certainly affected by location, while many of the ways in

which those relationships proceed are structured within culture. In the case of this

research, I have attempted to limit the Place-based narrative themes to what I saw in

terms of external context—What were the experiences that, because of missionaries'

physical presence there, would (or even could) only happen in the Place/Situation the

missionary was describing?

There can also be overlap between Temporality[217] and Place. Situations differ at

different times, either in history or in the life of an individual. The interaction of past,

present, and future in a particular setting is bound by both cultural and physical

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[215] Within missiology, culture's omnipresence is talked about a great deal. I suspect that the way Narrative Inquiry scholars define Place as both physical location and culture may be due to NI's roots in American educational philosophy—although its founders pull a great many ideas from Geertz, they tend to be somewhat imprecise when it comes to defining what they mean by "cultural situation."

[216] See Chapter 4.

[217] See Chpt. 3. For example, one Temporality theme was "Gained a Better Understanding of the Host Culture Over Time" (n=54, 21.86%). This motif was considered to be a Temporality theme because it dealt primarily with the missionary's personal growth over time; however, most people who described this change also mentioned its importance to their ministry.

possibilities. For instance, at this moment in time there are different options open to a

mixed-race child growing up in South Africa than there were before the fall of

apartheid.[218] These different options create different past and present experiences,

and open up different future experiences. This overlap was considered, and temporal

themes were primarily dealt with in the previous chapter.

I initially was drawn to themes that led me to look at Place within two main

categories: How do the physical aspects and practicalities of living in a particular

location affect the missionary's resilience journey? How does understanding of the

specific culture of a Place affect the missionary's story of resilience? Because of this

way of thinking, this Narrative Inquiry lens originally had the fewest narrative themes:

Place-based Adversity (n=144, 58.33%), and Better Ministry through Better

Understanding of Culture (n=58, 23.49%).

Each of these two original themes was present in a lot of missionaries' stories,

making this smaller group still worth examining in an attempt to understand

missionaries' stories of growth in resilience. However, I felt that a more robust

examination was necessary. Therefore, I went back and divided the idea of situation-

based Adversity into less frequent motifs to get a better understanding of exactly how

Place was described as affecting the missionary's resilience journey.

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[218] See: Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2019).

Place Narrative Themes

Missionaries Face Place-related Adversity.

In my original analysis of situation-related Adversity, I found that the majority of missionaries (n=144, 58.33%) do describe experiencing notable adversity due to their context.[219] Sometimes (n=69, 27.94%) they describe this adversity only in general terms, such as "suffering,"[220] "hardship,"[221] or "challenges."[222] Because the third interview question specifically uses the word "adversity," many missionaries (n=70, 28.34%) simply talk about "adversity" or "adversities."

However, there were also some clear patterns in terms of exactly what type of Place-based adversity missionaries describe. They most commonly described experiences of grappling with the cultural or language component of moving overseas: a full 34.41% (n=85) mention significant adversity in this area. Again, sometimes these descriptions are more general, as in "*things that were stressful/challenging/confusing about crossing cultures,*"[223] while some were very specific: "*In a culture that has caused me to doubt, question motives, and not trust I have had to fight against the*

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[219] Caveat: This interview only directly asked missionaries about adversity at the end of the third question cluster; to gain a more full picture of adversities, one would have to do a different kind of research. However, these are the things that people described in their resilience journey as a part of their context. I believe that the things that people describe without direct prompting are actually even more salient to a discussion of resilience because missionaries found them important enough to mention.

[220] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q57)

[221] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 9 years. (Q91)

[222] North American serving in South America for more than 30 years. (Q 43)

[223] Northern European serving in Southern Europe for 6 years. (Q62)

temptation to mistrust everyone."[224] In each case, what the missionary is expressing is

that there is something about the culture that represents adversity for them, whether

because they are simply having a hard time adjusting (n=28, 11.34%) or because there

is something about the cultural rules, expectations, or norms that are incompatible with

the missionaries' core values and needs (n=73, 29.55%).

Missionaries also frequently describe what I think of as "The Big Bads" (n=78,

31.58%). These are experiences that I believe anyone would describe as detrimental to

missionary well-being: Burnout (n=14, 5.67%), Grief (n=19, 7.69%), Trauma (n=18,

7.29%), and Isolation (n=27, 10.93%). Each of these types of experiences on their own

could be the "breaking adversity" that requires a resilient response. Again, sometimes

missionaries gave only general descriptions of their experiences, but sometimes they

were very specific in their stories:

> *In my experience there was not one person who came alongside of me. My husband and I started our own mission…The church we came from were not wholly behind the move we made…In fact our Senior Pastor thought we would not stay longer than 6 months or we would die.*[225]

Or:

> *My relationships with others have changed. I lost so many friends during my time in [country]. I had been trying to do what I believed was right while not doing anything to ruffle feathers. Eventually I broke…It took almost two years for me to recover from burnout. I had to deal with trauma. I will always have PTSD as a part of my story.*[226]

Related to the Big Bads were issues of health, which were frequently described

by missionaries. A significant number described experiencing mental health issues or

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[224] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q183)

[225] Southern African serving in Eastern Africa for 28 years. (Q70)

[226] North American serving in multiple fields for 7 years. (Q183)

crises due to the situation where they served (n=33, 13.36%). Missionaries also

suffered from physical health complications caused by their context (8.91%), some of

them extreme enough to really affect functioning or even to be life-threatening or

require a move away from the field for medical reasons (7.29%):

> *Our only daughter had many health issues when she was born, and we spent so much time in the hospital during her first 6 years. We returned to the States...and it nearly broke my heart not to be part of the 'missionary tribe,' even though I agreed that it was the right time to be 'home.'*[227]

The health of missionaries' relationships also suffered due to Place.[228] For a

smaller group, the cultural divide resulted in great difficulty with or in relationships with

local Christians, local colleagues, or just people in the host country in general (n=15,

6.07%). There was a larger group of missionaries who mentioned issues in their local

team (n=34, 13.77%). In these cases, what was described was particular relationships

that did not work due to something about working with this person/people in this

situation. Often, as in this missionary's experience, missionaries would describe a

change in the team or a change in who they were working with in the host country, and

this change would result in a better experience:

> *My approach to ministry changed drastically when I went from being task oriented in a hospital/institution to a church planting goal of getting patients well so that they could be the church when discharged. It changed everything. My relationship with others was negatively affected because no one else in the medical ministry where I was saw it that way. So there was friction…we moved away from it and worked in teaching the leaders of small floundering churches in that same country…I saw myself as making a spiritual difference and the church out there stronger.*[229]

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[227] North American serving in Eastern Europe for more than 30 years. Lightly edited to preserve privacy.

[228] Relationships with others have been explored more fully in Chpt 8, including the frequency of conflict with various groups. In this case, only those stories of direct conflict which only (or primarily) happened because of the setting were included.

[229] North American serving in the Caribbean for more than thirty years. (Q72)

Additionally, when missionaries talked about their adverse experiences due to Place, a significant number were concerned about safety (n=32, 12.96%). Sometimes they were facing the uncertain safety of living in a creative-access setting (n=14, 5.67%). Sometimes they had either been the victims of crime or were at risk of being victims of crime, or both (n=11, 4.45%). Finally, sometimes concerns about safety that caused context-related adversity were traced back to local coups, wars, or other civil unrest (n=21, 8.5%). For each missionary story specifically mentioning safety, there was a very real threat to the physical welfare of either the missionary or their family or team.

The suffering, poverty, or trauma experienced by the local people in the host country also had a profound effect on many missionaries (n=27, 10.93%). This is an area I had not thought about separately from considering secondary trauma (which was described by 23 missionaries, or 9.31%). From mentioning "witnessing human suffering on a level I never imagined"[230] to coping with "injustice and suffering, death and selfishness, evil, neglect, apathy and confusion"[231] to describing "a very broken environment ([City] red light district),"[232] missionaries were deeply moved by the misery they saw in others living in their context.

And finally, missionaries **did** talk about all those environmental factors that I had assumed at the beginning would be incredibly important (n=37, 14.98%). Sometimes this mention of environmental factors felt almost incidental, as when a missionary

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[230] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 17 years. (Q 52)

[231] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q78)

[232] Australian/New Zealander serving in South Asia for 6 years. (Q 90)

mentioned that in their semi-retirement they would leave the field for 4 1/2 months

"during the worst heat"[233] of the year, or when another missionary described the

isolation caused by living in an environment that was "so very rural."[234]   However,

there were plenty of accounts of pain caused by the physical environment, especially

for missionaries who lived through natural disasters or were impacted by them, as this

missionary was: *"When I was living in an area that was devastated by floods…I walked*

through grief and disappointment."[235]

A Better Understanding of Place Leads to Better Ministry.

Clearly, missionaries do experience adversities within their situation.

Understanding what those adversities are, and understanding how they actually affect

missionaries, is much more nuanced than I had originally thought; those adversities

create a complex range of physical, social, and cultural consequences. Additionally,

for many missionaries, rather than their surroundings being a hindrance, understanding

and accepting the Place where they serve is actually the key to a more fulfilling,

meaning-filled life of service (n=58, 23.49%).[236] The ability to look, perhaps not through

the eyes of an insider, but at least "over the shoulder" of a local, gives empathetic

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[233] North American serving South Asia for more than thirty years. (Q246)

Note: This missionary served in a country whose average temperature is around 80 degrees, but which regularly reaches the 105-110 degree mark. Personally, I would die in the average temperatures, let alone the highs.

[234] Southern African serving in Eastern Africa for more than thirty years. (Q120)

[235] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for more than thirty years. (Q124)

[236] This is a finding that I had expected, given the findings for a previous analysis of the survey write-ins; see Whiteman and Whiteman, "Support Toward Resilience."

insight into the culture and its people. This new discernment allows a missionary to become "an acceptable outsider" in ways that allow the gospel to be proclaimed in contextually appropriate ways: *"My thinking and beliefs have changed simply because the longer I am here the better I understand the beliefs of the host culture. I have changed the way I address issues by starting from the vantage point of the host culture rather than my own."*[237]

Demographic Analysis: Place-based Themes

CD-RISC Score Groups

Missionaries who scored in the higher CD-RISC categories were more likely to use nearly all of these Place-based themes. Both the adversities and greater service through understanding the culture include this trend. The Big Bads in particular exemplify this, with all four having zero people in the Low and Lowest CD-RISC categories reporting these adversities. Having seen the very clear link between redemption sequences and descriptions of context-based adversity, I found this less surprising than I would have otherwise—it makes sense to me that people who are more resilient would have and be willing to share stories that include both the highs and the lows of dealing with Place. The one notable exception here was adversity due to environment: Those in the Average, Low, and Lowest groups were more likely to

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[237] North American serving in the Caribbean for 5 years. (Q17)

describe these adversities, and none of the missionaries scoring in the Highest CD-

RISC group did so.

Age

All generations described situation-based adversity at least 50% of the time,

and there was a direct correlation between age and both descriptions of adversity and

linking greater understanding of the culture with greater service. I saw a general trend

upward in terms of age in reporting most specific adversities, with the notable

exceptions of descriptions of trauma, mental health difficulties, and grief/loss. I

suspect that rather than being excluded from such experiences, many older

missionaries feel that it's inappropriate or simply don't want to discuss them because

of generational cultural mores.

Gender

Women were more likely than men to use the vast majority of Place-related

themes.[238] However, there were some notable exceptions. Men were more likely than

women to connect cultural understanding and service. Men were also more likely than

women and single missionaries to talk about their difficulty with language or cultural

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[238] Because of the link between being a woman and being a single missionary (Approx. 2/3 of missionaries are women, and approx. half of those are married. A single male missionary is kind of a unicorn.), a connection between gender and marital status is not surprising.

acquisition. I found it extremely interesting, particularly given the high rate of gender-based violence in many countries, that men were more likely to express concern about all safety issues than women were. In the case of concerns about crime, men were almost four times more likely than women were to use this theme.   I hesitate to speculate or generalize, but I do wonder if a part of this difference is that men feel more responsible for the safety of others in addition to their own safety, and this makes safety a bigger issue for them.

Length of Service

It is difficult to quantify what's happening with Place-based themes and the number of years a missionary is in the field. For both the themes of Greater Understanding Leads to Greater Service and Adversity (in general), there is a direct correlation—the more years in the field, the more likely people are to report both this positive and this negative. However, when we break Adversity down into particular types of adversity, there is more nuance. All adversities related to culture are most keenly felt by those who have been in the field for four or fewer years, while almost all others are reported more frequently by those who have been there for more than 10 years. There are narrow ranges between the experience groups in describing concerns about safety related to crime, suffering from isolation, and issues of mental health.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have defined and delimited Place and described some of the key themes related to Place that missionaries use when they tell the story of their growth in resilience. Then I've given an overview of the demographic analysis for those themes: both missionaries who are older and those who score higher on the CD-RISC offer more descriptions of both the negatives and the positives of Place, and there is a connection between safety concerns and gender/marital status.

What can we learn from missionaries' use of themes related to Place in their stories? I see three main ideas in this aspect of missionaries' stories:

First of all, understanding the context is key for ministry. Not only missionaries need contextual knowledge, but also those of us who care for them. We need to know at least some of the challenges they will encounter in the different categories of Adversity and try to help them prepare for and face up to inevitable difficulties in ways that are both protective and responsive. I have heard (and seen from personal experience) the importance of field visits by those who are caring for and training missionaries. This research supports that idea—even as those who are in the field must understand the Place they serve, those who support them must understand what they face, at least enough to have an empathetic view.

Although it is important to have some understanding of what missionaries face, we do not have to have personally experienced, or even know all the the ins and outs of, each and every Place in order to support missionary resilience. There is simplicity in the complexity. We know that there are some common "things behind the thing" that many missionaries face as they serve, and we can perhaps even help them to see

that "there is nothing new under the sun"—whatever formidable foe we face, the movement toward resilience through redemption is the same. Support for missionaries can be focused, again, on increasing skills (especially cultural and language acquisition) that we know will benefit them in the long run.

My final take away from looking at how missionaries describe their environment as affecting their resilience is this: Although this is not the case for everyone, for many missionaries Place-based adversity is a stepping-stone, not a hindrance, to resilience. Among this group who talked about their context-based adversity, 93.75% (n=135) of them also reported the resilience cycle. These missionaries' stories don't stop with health challenges, cultural challenges to their values, difficult relationships, crime, civil war, heat, or deportations. No—these things are mentioned because they are a stop along the way, an example of how God is at work to redeem all things for His glory and for the sake of His beloved people.

CHAPTER 6:

INTRAPERSONAL INTERACTION

Introduction

When I was 9, I got stuck in a tree. Roaming the woods near my Michigan home with my best friend Jana, I found the perfect climb—a fallen pine with alternating branches going up its entire length. It was propped at an angle that made it easily scalable, but it went up at least 12 feet in the air, so it still felt daring. Desperately wanting to be nimble and brave, I started the scramble up. Initially, things went well. I scurried on hands and feet along the alternating branches, getting higher and higher, while Jana watched from the ground. When I was about 8 feet from the ground, I made a mistake—I looked down, froze, and sat down on the tree. Somehow in the process I got wedged between some branches, with one somehow going up through my shirt sleeve. I was well and truly stuck.

Jana offered advice and encouragement, but I did not listen—I would get out of that tree by myself. I did not want her to tell me what to do…and I CERTAINLY did not want her to go get a grown-up to help me. I was convinced that if I just tried hard enough, I could make it happen. I even gave myself a pep-talk, "Come on, Kriss, you can do this! You got up here, and you can get down!"

I struggled to get myself un-wedged for a solid 20 minutes.

At last, crying with vexation and humiliation, I admitted defeat—this was not a situation I could persevere my way out of. I told Jana to go get a grown up. She looked up at me and said, "I've been trying to tell you—I think if you just put your foot on that branch right there you can push yourself up." There was a branch right under my left foot that I couldn't see but she could, and sure enough, it was the key to getting myself unstuck and getting back down that tree. My grit had trapped me, but accepting the reality of my situation and my own limitations, and from there reaching out for help, set me free.

The Problem of the Giant Lens

The third Narrative Inquiry lens with which I will explore missionary stories of the journey toward greater resilience is that of Interaction. Within the Narrative Inquiry framework, Interaction, or Sociality, is comprised of two parts: the internal circumstances of the individual—their "internal hopes, feelings, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions"—and the social conditions in which they are having the

experience are examined as they impact and interact with one another.[239] In other words, this lens looks at the Interaction of an individual with themselves or with others. Narrative Inquiry has most often been used to study educational settings, in which educators look at their own internal emotion-scape as they interact with students. In this setting, authors seem to find it both easy and reasonable to combine the internal and external interactions to describe the cycle of teaching and learning.[240]

However, in applying Narrative Inquiry to these missionaries' stories, I found a very large group of narrative themes related to Interaction, or Sociality, in the resilience journey. This abundance of themes is likely due to the fact that all three question sets ask about Interaction as a support to resilience.[241] Certainly a very full set of themes examining Interpersonal Interaction (external) and Intrapersonal Interaction (internal) can be seen in missionaries' answers. Additionally, a third category emerged from the data: Interactions that Transition between the Intrapersonal and the Interpersonal.[242]

Obviously, in my use of Narrative Inquiry the lens of Interaction is just too large to deal with all at once. Due to the volume of data and the importance of Interaction, these categories will be split into three chapters. This organization makes the data

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[239] Clandinin and Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry* 41, 42, 50.

[240] See, for example:Jeong-Hee Kim, and Margaret M. Latta, "Narrative inquiry: Seeking relations as modes of Interactions," *The Journal of Educational Research*,103 (2) (2010): 69-71. doi: 10.1080/00220670903323164.

[241] Q1: "…How about your relationship with others? Your view of yourself?"

Q2: "… who specifically stands out as supportive? What was their function or role in your life? At what point and for how long did they come alongside you? What did they do to support you?"

Q3:"…think about the specific ways you responded to adversity that were helpful. What did you, personally, do that was helpful? How did your attitudes, thinking, or beliefs change? What did you do differently? How did your lifestyle or habits change?…"

[242] See Chapter 7.

more manageable and allows a look at each discrete type of Interaction seen frequently in missionaries' stories of growth in resilience.

This chapter will focus on Intrapersonal Interactions. The top narrative motifs for this group of themes will be examined and exemplified in missionaries' own words. Demographic analysis and a description of the Intrapersonal counter-narrative themes seen in missionaries' answers will follow. The chapter will end with a discussion of Intrapersonal Interaction as a support in missionary stories of growth in resilience.

Intrapersonal Interaction Themes[243]

Intrapersonal Interaction, as mentioned above, is defined within Narrative Inquiry as a person's internal elements. I would argue that what makes these interior aspects Interactions is the way we negotiate them within ourselves and then are motivated to action by them. For example, I know that I've had experiences of realizing only through a process of self-negotiation what my deeply held values are, what they mean for my identity, and how I want to operate in the world as a result.

When it comes to Intrapersonal Interaction, then, I would separate the narrative themes missionaries use into three main categories: attitudes, attributes, and

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[243] In this chapter, only those narrative themes used more than 20% of the time are discussed. An additional 5 themes fell between 5% and 11%.

There were 6 additional themes that broke 14%:
Experiences of Internal Joy (n=45, 18.22%)
Intentional Practice of Gratitude (n=40, 16.19%)
Awareness of need to Change (n=40, 16.19%)
Experiencing greater humility (n=39, 15.79%)
Coping with a Specific Mental Health Issue (n=38, 15.38%)
Coping with a Specific Physical Health Issue (n=36, 14.57%)

actions.**244** ***Attitudes*** of intrapersonal interaction are those internal mindsets which

missionaries expressed as key to their resilience—the perspectives and beliefs that

sustained them, changed them, or prompted them toward action. ***Attributes*** are traits

that missionaries talk about possessing (or wanting to possess) that let them be who

they want to be in the world. ***Actions*** of intrapersonal interaction are those behaviors

and choices that missionaries say they put into practice in their individual lives to

support their resilience.

Attitudes

Missionaries express a set of attitudes based in acceptance: of themselves, of

the realities of their situation, and of a helpful theology. The vast majority express that

acceptance of themselves is a key support to growth in resilience (n=224,

90.69%).[245] Often this is expressed as seeing growth in themselves or feeling grateful

for the ways that their resilience cycles have changed them. Many times acceptance of

self results in something along the lines of being "more relaxed in ministry" and feeling

that "my part is to obey and to do my best."**246** It takes the pressure off in both life and

work.

An acceptance of self includes the ways that missionaries feel self-assurance

about their capacity (n=98, 39.68%) and self-efficacy (n=142, 57.49%). Missionaries

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244 These are categories that I personally created, simply for the sake of being able to mentally organize so many codes. There are likely additional ways to create sets from these narrative themes.

[245] As the second most frequently used theme, this idea is only surpassed by Resilience Cycles.

246 Southeastern Asian serving in Eastern Asia for 15 years. (Q118)

have grown in their confidence that they are "called," "developed,"[247] and "equipped"

for their work.[248] However, acceptance of self also includes a greater awareness of

their own needs and limitations (n=148, 59.92%). There is a duality to that awareness:

on the one hand, missionaries learn they aren't as capable as they thought or hoped,

but on the other hand there is a freedom in letting go of unrealistic and unrealizable

expectations they have of themselves. For example,

> *I learned that I wasn't invincible…I expected less perfection from myself. I learned my own boundaries and more about my capacities.… I stopped trying to be all things to all people. (Or rather, I was stopped!) I gained a deeper revelation and understanding that God doesn't love me because of what I can do for him, or what I can 'produce.' This was huge!*[249]

Out of this acceptance, missionaries were able to have more grace toward

themselves (n=82, 33.2%). At times, missionaries were even able to move beyond

acceptance: *"The older you get, the more discerning, the more experienced in ministry,*

the more self-aware... you realize what your strengths and weaknesses are. And you

become more comfortable with those weaknesses. You see God-at-work, able to use

those weaknesses. And in that, you can extend yourself grace."[250] In the best-case

scenario for missionaries, the tendency toward shame is answered internally by self-

empathy that changes a missionary's identity and opens the door to getting those

needs met in a way that is healthy and holistic.[251] They accept their flaws, their

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[247] North American serving in Western Europe for 21 years. (Q182)

[248] North American serving in Western Europe for 21 years. (Q182)

[249] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q148)

[250] Australian/New Zealander serving in South Asia for 19 years. (Q220)

[251] This self-empathy also affects the relationships with others (see later in this chapter and next chapter): Often accompanied by a renewed awareness of self and others (71.62%) or practicing self-advocacy (66.22%). Approximately half the time accompanied by an awareness of the missionary's need for others (51.35%) or having greater grace toward others (57.43%)

vulnerabilities, and their limits with the same kind of loving care toward themselves that

they would show to someone else: *"I am less of a 'striver' now. More patient with*

myself, more forgiving, more open to just moments in each day…I know it doesn't

depend on my great planning or perfect execution of ministry."[252]

When they accept themselves, missionaries are also able to view their lives and

ministries overseas as a "marathon, not a sprint"[253] (n=51, 20.65%). This means that

when they are tired, when they are stressed, when they are broken, they seek long-

term sustainability and growth rather than a quick fix. They don't try to "power

through" every situation but accept their need to "pace"[254] themselves in life and work.

An **acceptance of reality** is also an important attitude expressed in

missionaries' stories of their growth in resilience (n=200, 80.97%). They specifically

mentioned the need to acknowledge reality as it is, to take life on life's terms, and to

receive the situations they find themselves in with grace. Again, there is a duality—on

the one hand of truly seeing and acknowledging the difficult realities of their situation,

and on the other feeling freedom in the understanding that all does not depend on

them:

> *The lows are not as low and the highs are not as high. In all defeats, there is a*
> *grain of joy and peace and in all victories, there is a degree of recognition that*
> *not all is perfect. In the end, there is a hopeful expectancy that the story that*
> *God is writing is fundamentally about Him and not about me -- or those that I*

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[252] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 7 years. (Q24)

[253] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q78)
At least six missionaries directly cite being in a "marathon" rather than a "sprint." Others express the idea less directly by describing the fact that they will be in the field a long time and therefore need to do whatever they can to care for themselves so their ministry is sustainable.

[254] For example: North American serving in Central Asia for 8 years. (Q61)
North American serving in Southern Asia for 17 years. (Q34)
North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 27 years (Q148), etc

serve. And, it's a story that is not over and won't be, even after He calls me, or those that I serve, home. My view regarding ministry is much more long-term and my role seems much less important than what I thought in the beginning of my ministry. This allows me to be much more accepting of myself and others. It allows me to see hardships as temporary and allows me to live more in the moment.[255]

Missionaries often see the connection between the stories they tell themselves, the perspectives they hold, and the way those perspectives change their experience of their realities (n=159, 64.37%).[256] Because of this connection, they are able to receive a "shift in perspective,"[257] seeking to turn toward a positive mindset (n=170, 68.83%) whenever possible. As they accept their reality, they are able to "flex more," focus on

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[255] North American serving in South America for 27 years. (Q157)
Edited slightly for clarity.

[256] Bernard G. Guerney Jr., *Relationship Enhancement: Skill-Training Programs for Therapy, Problem Prevention, and Enrichment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: Jossey-Bass Behavioral Science Series, 1991).

Although reality is a constant, the way it affects us according to our perspective is not. My own thinking in this comes primarily from the counseling school of thought exemplified by the Relationship Enhancement program, in which I am certified and have taught classes for 8 years. (See https://nire.org/ for the current iteration of Relationship Enhancement.)

Additionally, popular psychology and counseling resources affirm this view of perspective-affecting experience (and therefore personal reality). (See, for example, the work of Brene Brown in *Dare to Lead* and *Atlas of the Heart*, or popular-level work cited in this article: https://www.wellandgood.com/perception-is-reality/) The Baader-Meinhof phenomenon would also be an example of this–having noticed/learned something, it suddenly seems to pop up everywhere. This is not a change in reality, but it is certainly a change in one's experience of reality.

In RE, and in other material on empathy, a core tenet is the idea that one can "look over the shoulder" of another person (perspective taking); another is the idea that one can be emotionally "tipped into the negative" (which leads to a cycle of negative action/response, and further negative viewpoint) or "tipped into the positive" (which leads to a cycle of positive action/response and further positive viewpoint). The perspective one chooses to take, empathetic or not, negative or positive, has a profound effect on the experiences of relationships but also of the whole personal experience.

Fundamentally, this narrative theme is included because I saw it in these stories. However, this theme is also an example of this very concept—having been trained to look for changes in perspective which change experience, my perception is that I have found them.

[257] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q124)

changing their own attitudes and actions, and seek to be "*less idealistic and dogmatic and more focused on living well than on a particular end goal.*"[258]

For some missionaries, part of accepting reality and seeking a positive mindset to have a more positive experience is this type of flexibility (n=63, 25.51%). Sometimes this flexibility involves a willingness to change as the circumstances warrant, and sometimes it involves accepting new goals and means of getting to them. Often flexibility is about giving control over to God: *"My priorities have become His priorities so that my agenda is more flexible…Now, my question is rather what is the Lord seeking to do here and what does He want me to learn."*[259]

Often flexibility is made possible by taking the long view of the situation, life, or ministry (n=54, 21.86%). Missionaries' stories often include the idea that God is in charge of the time-table, and they accept that their stories are part of a much longer story. Out of this acceptance comes a willingness to stay in a particular location, knowing that they will likely not see immediate fruit; the duality here is that knowing that the work will be long and hard actually often frees the missionary to serve with more freedom and joy:

> *I would say that I have become less driven in ministry. I feel less pressure on me to do everything right and more confident in God achieving His plan even in a messy situation. I'm more comfortable with things going wrong, and with people messing things up, and with things happening slowly…I feel more grace-filled in our ministry. I also see that it takes much longer than I used to think it should. I want growth to happen now, but he works patiently in a time frame that is sometimes way too slow for me. He knows that deep change takes time.*[260]

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[258] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q66)

[259] Northern European serving in Eastern Africa for 17 years. (Q197)

[260] North American serving in South Asia for 29 years. (Q208)

A final category of attitudes that missionaries express is acceptance of helpful theological beliefs. These come back, for the most part, to an **acceptance that all things happen under God's care**.[261] This acknowledgement of God's hand is deeply personal, as they cite God's strength made perfect in their weakness (n=84, 24.01%). Sometimes this is connected to accepting themselves and the limits of their power or giftings or energy. Sometimes this is in comparison to the mess they made of things when they tried to do things in their own strength. Often missionaries described the ways that their own inabilities or shortcomings don't bother them in light of God's power: *"I am not shaken when times are bad, in sickness or difficult circumstances because through the difficult experiences I had gotten to know that He is always there, he is the rock under my feet and it doesn't matter if I stand on the rock or lie on the rock because I have no strength left. The rock doesn't budge!"*[262]

Accepting God's hand in all things also means that missionaries embrace a helpful theology of suffering—one which allows them to process not only their own pain but also the pain they see around them in ways that turn them toward God (n=113, 45.75%). This theology may help them to receive adversity differently: They may have "learnt about stewarding pain that has been entrusted to us."[263]   For some,

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[261] This summation is an idea from a beloved Orthodox prayer by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow:

Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will. In every hour of the day, reveal your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words, guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all things are under Your care. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all that it shall bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray Yourself in me. Amen.

[262] Western European serving in South Asia for 18 years. (Q164)

[263] Australian/New Zealander serving in South Asia for 19 years. (Q220)

this theology is grounded in imitating Christ's suffering: *"I learned more from God's word to see Jesus's life more deeply, he demonstrated for us how He laid down his life for the gospel's sake…we as his followers and children must go through the same thing on this earth through loving God and one another."*[264] Others found help in scripture: *"I find the Psalms to be more relevant than ever before in my life. The passion, challenge, pain, frustration, anger, joy, and through it all the fervent pursuit of relationship with God, have kept me sane in times when I do feel alone."*[265] As in this missionary's experience, this is not a shallow or naive "everything is fine" narrative, but an acknowledgement both of the pain and the possibility of redemption:

> *I know that the pain (cracks) will happen, but based on my experience, I also know that God is with me and that He will bring the healing (gold) to that pain. But, don't get me wrong...it doesn't get any easier. After eleven years on the field, I have been able to look back many times to see and understand the purpose of the pain. And I know that I have become more resilient because now I can thank God for the pain (during and after) and trust that He is using all of it for my good and for His glory.*[266]

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[264] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q26)

[265] North American serving in Southern Europe for 19 years. (Q247)

[266] North American serving in Western Africa for 11 years. (Q101)

Attributes

Alongside these attitudes of acceptance of themselves, of the realities of their situation, and of a helpful theology come two additional thematic categories. The first set, I would argue, answers this question: Who do I want to be in the world? This is a group of personal attributes that missionaries say they value, are seeking, desire, or want to increase.

Who do missionaries want to be in the world? I would argue that there are four Intrapersonal Interaction narrative themes they use frequently that (at least in part) answer this question. First of all, missionaries want to be people of perseverance–they want to have grit. Grit is defined within psychology as "a personality trait characterized by perseverance and passion for achieving long-term goals."[267] In this study, missionaries described it as stubbornness,[268] never giving up,[269] pushing through,[270] or "continuing whatever it takes"[271] (n=86, 34.82%), and many of them found it extremely important. If missionaries quit the field every time there is a problem, annoyance, delay, or difficulty, they may not even make it off the plane from their passport country, and they certainly will not make through their first electricity/water issue,[272] shopping

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[267] *APA Dictionary of Psychology,* "Grit," https://dictionary.apa.org/grit, accessed December 12, 2022.

[268] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 22 years. (Q69)
North American serving in North America for more than 30 years. (Q174)

[269] Australian/New Zealander serving in Northern Europe for 6 years. (Q137)

[270] North American serving in Eastern Europe for 24 years. (Q239)

[271] Western European serving in the Caribbean for 13 years. (Q58)

[272] South African serving in Eastern Africa for 28 years. (Q70)

trip,[273] or visa application.[274] From a practical standpoint, grit is absolutely necessary to get through the smaller adversities of cross-cultural life.

It is important to note, however, that not all grit is good. About two-thirds of the time (n=55, 22.27% of respondents, 63.95% of Grit) when missionaries described their own grit in a difficult situation, they were talking about what I would categorize as "good grit." Good grit is the ability to healthily move forward during adversity. This can be contrasted with "bad grit" (referred to by Dr. Andrea Parker as the "Godless Grind"[275]), which caused the missionary to push through in unhealthy ways or with negative outcomes—bad grit can actually be a cause of brokenness and burn out rather than a protective skill.

This can be a difficult distinction to make, particularly when a missionary is in the midst of adversity. The concept of grit is made even more complicated when we consider that even bad grit can be the negative beginning of a Redemption Cycle,[276] so missionaries may perceive it as a good thing overall due to the ways that God used it to change or teach them. For example:

> *I had a very strong sense of God's call in my life. Knowing his call enabled me to persevere. I think I went through a time of burnout and I know people always seem to think that burnout is bad and needs to be avoided. But I am very thankful for that time, because God burned away a lot of dross in my life….I look back on that time and I think I just hung onto God and kept going one step at a time. And he brought me into a spacious place, a place of joy.[277]*

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[273] North American serving in Southern Europe for 3 years. (Q139)

[274] North American serving in Northern Europe for 9 years. (Q35)

[275] Andrea Parker, World Gospel Mission "Godly Grit vs. Godless Grind," blog post: July 5, 2021, accessed December 12, 2022. https://www.wgm.org/story/godly-grit

[276] n=17, 6.88% of total, 20% of Grit were classified this way.

[277] North American serving in South Asia for 29 years. (Q196)

Ultimately, I believe that only the missionaries themselves (though perhaps with help

from trusted people) can define whether the grit they showed/are showing in a situation

was the path of pain or of resilience—or maybe both.

Missionaries also want to move through the world with authenticity (n=82,

33.2%):

> I think I have a more honest view of myself. I see my weaknesses but don't feel I
> need to cover them. I think I am better at embracing my weaknesses and seeing
> them as opportunities for others to come alongside me and fill my weakness with
> their strength. I think I am more open to letting others help me since I've
> experienced the wonder and freedom that comes when they do. I think I have a
> clearer picture of myself.[278]

This willingness to put themselves out there, to be seen and known by others, is often

linked to an awareness of God's love or to their identity in Christ. Knowing they are the

Beloved, they are able to be truthful with the world in all their beautiful and faulty

uniqueness.

An aspect of authenticity that connects back to accepting themselves is setting

good and healthy boundaries with others (n=83, 33.6%). The need for boundaries may

be expressed broadly, or may be a part of a story of setting a particular emotional,

physical, or time limit in order to protect a healthy balance in life. Missionaries

described being willing to practice "proper selfishness"—the type of boundaries that

allow them to look after themselves in order to look after others.[279] And they often

found that in setting those boundaries they actually increased their ability to serve and

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[278] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 11 years. (Q237)

[279] Northern European serving in Southern Europe for 6 years. (Q62)

work as part of God's mission in the world as they stayed within their own sustainable

limits.

Missionaries who move through the world authentically and set healthy

boundaries are not, however, insensitive or hasty—they don't automatically say "No!"

to everything. They often see the ability to respond rather than react as a key part of

their growth in resilience (n=66, 27.13%). They contrast their early days of jumping into

conflict or agreeing to things too quickly with their more mature responses of taking

things slowly,[280] allowing others time to process, and taking time to think through their

own responses.[281]

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[280] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for over 30 years. (Q15)

[281] North American serving in the Caribbean for 5 years. (Q17)

Actions

In addition to these attitudes and attributes that missionaries value and see as a part of their resilience journey, there are very **practical actions of self-care** that many missionaries described engaging in to pursue long-term sustainability (n=133, 53.85%).[282] It is important to note that I have informally heard experienced missionaries critique the idea of "self-care"—they perceive it as an excuse for younger missionaries to take breaks rather than persevere, as selfish, or even as thinly veiled laziness.[283] However, missionaries who described their practice of self-care in this research clearly think of it as a ministry tool—the "sharpening" they need to be effective and to "function in the ways/times in which He leads me."[284]

In addition to over 30 direct mentions of "self-care," missionaries described their efforts to nurture their physical, spiritual, mental, and/or holistic lives to meet their needs and maintain healthy balance. Most frequently, missionaries included spiritual practices as key to their resilience (n=204, 82.59%). Actions like prayer,[285]

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[282] In some of his work, Whiteman has suggested that missionaries would benefit from leaving behind the idea of "self-care" and toward "self-compassion"—that missionaries should treat themselves the way they would treat a dear friend and care for themselves as they would tell someone they love to care for themselves. I really like this idea of self-compassion, but it's definitely not yet the nomenclature used in the field.

[283] Personal conversation, August of 2021, with North American serving in Eastern Europe for 26 years.

[284] North American serving in Western Asia for 13 years. (Q185)

[285] Example: Australian/New Zealander serving in South Asia for 6 years (Q90)

meditation,[286] fasting,[287] worship,[288] and immersion in scripture[289] increased

missionaries' connection to God[290] and thereby increased their resilience.

A variety of physical health practices (n=65, 26.32%) also increased

missionaries' resilience. These included intentionality about rest, exercise, and proper

nutrition.[291] Attention to physical health also included paying attention to "weekly and

seasonal rhythms"[292] in order to thrive in the flow of work—to attend to the body

cyclically when the pressures of life and service didn't allow daily attention.

All of these self-care practices require purposefulness, which was often

expressed through a helpful routine (n=50, 20.24%) that facilitated self-discipline to

meet missionaries' needs on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis. Having structure

and consistency takes self-care from a possibility to a given.[293] This framework also

reduces decision fatigue and increases the likelihood that missionaries will be able to

balance their stresses with supports.

A final category of Intrapersonal Interaction through self-care actions is rest

(n=103, 41.7%). Many missionaries care for not only their physical health but also their

socio-emotional health with adequate rest. This can mean practicing good sleep

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[286] Example: Western Asian serving in Western Asia for 18 years. (Q209)

[287] Example: Southeastern Asian serving in multiple locations for 15 years (Q118)

[288] Example: Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years (Q7)

[289] Example: North American serving in Central Asia for 12 years. (Q12)

[290] See Chapter 7.

[291] See, for example, North American serving in Eastern Africa for 25 years (Q221): *"I learned that getting good rest, exercise, and nutrition makes a big difference to my ability to handle adversity."*

[292] North American missionary in Eastern Europe for 28 years. (Q153)

[293] Northern European serving in Northern Africa for 30 years. (Q86)

hygiene in order to get adequate sleep,[294] daily rest to "keep healthy limits continuously with working time, with social situations, with expectations on myself,"[295] and cycles of retreat[296] and renewal.[297] These times of disconnecting from work, of experiencing joy and connection, and of taking a "break" from the inherent adversities of living cross-culturally actually give missionaries the energy and ability to persevere.[298] I would argue that adequate rest even offers opportunities for mini-Resilience Cycles, as missionaries "bounce back" with greater physical, emotional, and mental reserves when rested:

> *An important part of resilience for me is to know that in my weakness God is strong.…And to take the time I need to rest when I realize that I am tired or stressed.… To keep healthy limits continuously with working time, with social situations, with expectations on myself. And remind myself about it.…Had I not rested I would have not done a good work on that day, nor the days after. It would be wasted time.*[299]

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[294] Australian/New Zealander missionary in Eastern Africa for over 30 years. (Q243)

[295] Northern European missionary in South Asia for 9 years. (Q176)

[296] Example: Northern European serving in South America for 17 years (Q65), "I think creating a habit of regular retreats to refresh and listen to the Lord and pray were very helpful in coming through these times."

[297] Example: North American serving in multiple locations for 25 years (Q80), "We looked for the beautiful places and interesting activities in each place we lived.…Taking joy in the place you live, despite the difficulties, adds resilience."

[298] North American serving in South Asia for 13 years. (Q110)

[299] Northern European missionary in South Asia for 9 years. (Q176)

Demographic Analysis: Intrapersonal Interaction

Age

While some of the demographic analysis for this dissertation falls into fairly consistent patterns, the use of these narrative themes by the different age groups was all over the map—frankly, it was a bit difficult mentally organize.[300] Only one theme out of 23 (Good/Healthy Grit) showed a direct correlation with age, and only three themes showed a general trend upward in usage with age.[301] On the other hand, four themes showed a direct negative correlation, with an additional three showing a general trend downward in usage with age. A full 12 of the themes showed no pattern at all related to age. However, one interesting thing did emerge: between the direct negative correlations and the themes with no pattern, a whopping 11 narrative themes (a full 48%) were used the **least** commonly by those in the Silent Generation. I believe this may be a genuine example of some generational differences—members of the Silent Generation are likely to value grit, acceptance of reality, and an internal locus of emotional control, and they are less likely either to value or to express that they value other Intrapersonal Interactions as supportive to their resilience.

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[300] Looking at generational experiences and outside research on generational differences will definitely be one of the first extra-dissertation papers to come out of this work.

[301] Spiritual Practices increase Resilience, Positive Mindset, and Perception affects Reality.

CD-RISC Score Group

The patterns in terms of CD-RISC score and descriptions of Intrapersonal Interactions were also mixed. On the one hand, 17 out of 23 themes had those missionaries scoring in the High or Highest groups at the top, indicating a general increase in use of these themes with rising CD-RISC score. On the other hand, for seven of those themes there was no internal pattern of usage, and for three themes missionaries in the Low group tied with those in the Highest group.[302] This tie is interesting as these are the two score groups that have the same number of people in them (15). Five themes were most likely to be used by those in the Low or Lowest score groups,[303] and one was most likely to be used by those in the Average group.[304] This may be a situation where the uneven numbers in the different score groups makes it difficult to assess use of these themes; the very low number of missionaries from the Lowest score group who chose to participate in the interview is a particular pickle which potentially gives the responses of these individuals extra weight.[305]

Number of Fields of Service

Considering the possibility that the number of locations (one field, two fields, or more than two fields) in which a missionary serves may connect to resilience, I looked

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[302] Themes where Highest and Low scorers tied for most usage: Acceptance of self, Self Care, Marathon not Sprint.

[303] Themes most likely to be used by Low or Lowest score groups: Grit, Boundaries, Respond not React, Long View (though apart from the Lowest group this was a direct correlation), Routine.

[304] Greater grace toward self.

[305] This is another area that would be worth further investigation outside this dissertation.

for patterns—was there any number of fields which seemed to connect to greater

reports of resilience? There were equal numbers of themes (5) with direct correlations

and direct negative correlations to the number of fields in which a missionary served.

The most likely scenario (present 8 times) was that those who served in three fields

were least likely to use a theme,[306] those who served in one field were in the middle,[307]

and those who served in two fields were most likely to use an Intrapersonal Interaction

theme to describe their growth in resilience.[308] The connection between serving in two

places, but not more than two places, should be looked into further; it may have

implications for the ways that mission organizations make decisions about relocating

missionaries versus helping them thrive in the location they are in.

Length of Service

There is also one interesting pattern in the use of these themes in terms of

experience (how many years a missionary was/has been in the field).   Those most

likely overall to describe themes of supportive Intrapersonal Interaction are those in the

"middle years" of service, from 5-29,[309] while both missionaries who have served for 30

or more years and those who have served for four or fewer are less likely to do so (see

chart below).

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[306] Those who served in three fields were at the top for 7 themes, and the bottom for 13 themes.

[307] Those who served in one field were at the top for 7 themes and the bottom for 8 themes.

[308] Those who served in two fields were at the top for 10 themes and the bottom for 2 themes. Both times that those who served in two fields were at the bottom (Helpful Theology of suffering, approx. 7% difference; Positive mindset, approx. 2% difference), serving in one field and serving in more than 2 fields were tied.

[309] Due to ties the numbers in the chart add up to more than 23.

Years in Field	Most Likely to use this number of Intrapersonal Interaction Themes	Least likely to use this number of Intrapersonal Interaction Themes
<4 or 4	0	14
5-9	8	1
10-19	7	1
20-29	7	0
30 or 30+	2	8

As a missionary training practitioner myself, I took particular note of the numbers for missionaries in the field for four or fewer years. This paucity of descriptions of supportive Intrapersonal Interactions may mean that gaining these supportive skills is a matter of growth over time. However, it also may indicate that inexperienced missionaries would benefit from better expectation-setting or better training in their own internal attitudes, attributes, and actions.

The frequent dip/infrequent usage for those serving thirty or more years is likely behind the much lower number of direct correlations with experience: Only using the theme of Healthy/Good Grit has a direct connection to the number of years in the field.[310] Otherwise, due to the high number of times there is a dip for those serving longest, there are six themes with a general trend upward in usage and no direct negative correlations. Due to the dearth of Intrapersonal Interaction stories of those in

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[310] Which, of course, connects back to this theme's popularity among the Silent generation, who are most likely to have served for this length of time, though some Boomers also hit this mark.

the field for four or fewer years, I found only one general trend downward.[311] Finally,

due to the high number of themes which "peak" in the middle years of service, there

are 21 themes for which the usage across the years of experience starts at the low for

four or fewer years, goes up to the aforementioned peak and then down toward the

30+ year mark. Because this group of experienced missionaries have certainly had the

time to gain Intrapersonal Interaction supports/skills, I suspect that they are less likely

to report them more as a result of generational culture than because of their

absence.[312]

Gender

In evaluating gender and the use of Intrapersonal Interaction themes to describe

growth in resilience, there are some interesting notes to make. First of all, although the

number of themes used more frequently by women (12) is close to the number used

more frequently by men (10),[313] there are a couple of clear categorical differences in

these themes. First of all, women are more likely (by more than 5%) to use the overall

theme of acceptance of self, particularly in terms of accepting limitations and having

greater grace toward themselves. However, men are slightly (by 5% or less) more likely

to describe having confidence in their own capacity and self-efficacy and to approach

their lives as a marathon, not a sprint. Men are more likely to use all of the themes of

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[311] See chart above: no themes where those serving for four or fewer years are the most likely to use it. For the theme "Greater Awareness of my Own Needs," the peak is at 5-9 years, while longer service makes use of this theme progressively less likely.

[312] Because of the structure of this study, I can only say that they do not **report** these skills/supports as frequently, not that they do not practice/have them.

[313] The idea of growing in the ability to respond rather than react is used equally by men and women.

accepting reality (though the idea that our perception affects reality shows a slighter difference). Men are slightly more likely to express that they trust in God's strength in their weakness, while women are considerably more likely to ascribe growth in resilience to a helpful theology of suffering. Among the ways of being, men are slightly (3.15%) more likely to describe healthy grit, but women are slightly more likely (1.22%) to use themes of overall grit, boundaries, and authenticity (in the case of "authenticity," twice as likely). Finally, women are either slightly or considerably more likely to use all themes of practical self-care.

These gender differences, particularly in the areas of acceptance, may connect to some larger themes of what is expected/demanded from men and women culturally and/or in the field. It is possible that the underlying gender-role expectations for men as strong, self-reliant, dependable, etc. make it more difficult for men to undertake (or report undertaking) behaviors of self-care. Men may feel more pressure to "suck it up" and both simply accept reality and emphasize their own strengths. Women, on the other hand, may in Christian/missionary circles feel greater ability (and even pressure) to express weaknesses or limitations—it may be acceptable for women to describe vulnerability in ways that it is not acceptable for men to do so.

Counter-Narratives of Intrapersonal Interaction

This is the first chapter in which it is necessary to describe some counter-narratives—places where missionaries report experiences of Internal Interaction that do

not strengthen, or even weaken, their resilience. These counter-narrative themes showed some missionaries' experiences of not being supported by interaction with themselves or being less supported than they used to be in their resilience journey. There were only three counter-narrative themes used by missionaries more than 5% of the time.[314]

First of all, some missionaries expressed that they were not receiving enough Intrapersonal support (n=15, 6.07%). Such stories may be descriptions of stopping or slowing some activity that was supportive at one time but that the missionary could no longer keep up. Missionaries also talked about a lack of, loss of, or change in the supportive relationship with self such as growth in "uncertainty" or blaming themselves for the adversity they are experiencing.[315]

Secondly, some missionaries were struggling at the time that they wrote the interview, and that meant they described that difficulty rather than (or as a major part of) their resilience journey (n=19, 7.69%). For these missionaries, the pain was too present and the redemption too distant—they were in a time of needing others to hold hope for them. For example, *"I am in a phase now that I cannot yet attach to the concept of "resiliency." A kind of 'dark night of the soul,' many truths are being revealed to me regarding my actual operating theology. It feels as though God has gone silent."*[316]

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[314] Because the numbers for these counter-narrative themes are so much smaller, an analysis of the demographics is not really possible.

[315] See, for example: the account of a North American serving in Western Asia for 6 years who describes the negative changes in their relationship with God as due to their own failing of "trust issues." (Q168)

[316] North American missionary in Southern Europe for 7 years. (Q20)

Finally, the most frequently used counter-narrative theme is this: "I am not resilient" (n=25, 10.12%). This is an important emotional reality for these missionaries, who either viewed themselves as lacking resilience or lacking growth in resilience. However, it was notable to me that of those who expressed this thought, 18 (7.29% total, 72% of those saying they are not resilient)[317] of them follow statements that they are not resilient with stories of being resilient. This is an area of tension, as missionaries' own perceptions certainly are important when evaluating resilience; but from the outside it appears that, whether they see it or not, they are actually engaged in resilience cycles that are moving them up the spiral staircase. An additional area of exploration is what is happening with that 2.83% who express a lack of resilience and do not tell a story of resilience. It certainly seems logically impossible to me that there would be 0% of missionaries who are not resilient—otherwise we would not get so many questions and so much focus on helping them to become more resilient. At the same time, because this research is based in the stories missionaries have told at a particular time in a particular situation, that 2.83% can only be labeled as missionaries who did not tell a story of resilience, **not** as missionaries who are not resilient.

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[317] Leaving only 2.83% of the total study respondents who say they are not resilient and do not tell a story of resilience.

Discussion

Although I cannot make assertions in the negative, I do believe that there are some conclusions to draw about Intrapersonal Interaction and growth in resilience based on these stories. In this chapter, I have defined Interaction and its component of Intrapersonal Interaction.   I have then examined the most common Intrapersonal Interaction themes (organized as supportive Attitudes, Attributes, and Actions) and analyzed them demographically. Although there are far fewer direct correlations with these themes, there are interesting patterns in terms of age, CD-RISC score, number of fields, experience, gender, and marital status. Finally, in this chapter I examined the main counter-narratives—those places where missionaries expressed, not growth in resilience, but a lack of growth or even a lack of resilience altogether.

What does a story about a 9-year-old stuck in a tree have to do with Intrapersonal Interaction as a support to resilience? Sometimes we all grit ourselves into situations we can't grit our way out of. We have to accept our own limitations and the situations we find ourselves in, and we often are led to action when we do. That action may be reaching out to others for help, which marks a change in our self-concept from self-contained to interdependent. In the next chapter, I will talk about Transitional Interactions—when that change in self leads to a change in our relationships with other people.

What we see in missionaries' stories of Intrapersonal Interaction is that a life of resilience is a life of acceptance…and a life of acceptance is a life of living-in-the-tension. Through redemption sequences and Resilience Cycles, missionaries are moving onward to a new perspective, and the possibility of that movement brings

hope. But it doesn't dispel the pain or make that change easy or fast. Acknowledging the bad means receiving the places where they are not enough and admitting that they are not superheroes—but it also means they don't need to be. Accepting themselves and their lives both in their capacity and their constraints creates vulnerability—but it also produces freedom and grace.

Acceptance of self is a clear path for resilient missionaries to move toward self-empathy and true self-care. Having accepted both what they can control and what they cannot, they can move toward intentional pursuit of those postures and practices that will become responsive and protective factors in their resilience. Attendance to their own strengths, weaknesses, and needs through practical acts becomes the active search for the gold that can fill the cracks.

CHAPTER 7:

TRANSITIONAL INTERACTION

Introduction

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, a young prince lived in a shining castle. Although he had everything his heart desired, the prince was spoiled, selfish, and unkind. But then, one winter's night, an old beggar woman came to the castle and offered him a single rose in return for shelter from the bitter cold. Repulsed by her haggard appearance, the prince sneered at the gift and turned the old woman away, but she warned him not to be deceived by appearances, for beauty is found within.

And when he dismissed her again, the old woman's ugliness melted away to reveal a beautiful enchantress. The prince tried to apologize, but it was too late, for she had seen that there was no love in his heart, and as punishment, she transformed him into a hideous beast, and placed a powerful spell on the castle, and all who lived there. Ashamed of his monstrous form, the beast concealed himself inside his castle, with a magic mirror as his only window to the outside world. The rose she had offered was truly an enchanted rose, which would bloom until his twenty-first year.   If he could learn to love another, and earn her love in return by the time the last petal fell, then the spell would be broken. If not, he would be doomed to remain a beast for all time. As the years passed, he fell into despair, and lost all hope, for who could ever learn to love a beast?[318]

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[318] *Beauty and the Beast*, directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise (Walt Disney Pictures, 1991), animated feature film.

We all know the ending of this story—the Beast is, in fact, able to connect with a sassy woman who (with the help of talking household accessories) inspires and challenges him to change. Having experienced an internal transformation—from the beastly interior that inspired his exterior form, to a humane and caring person—the Beast is first relationally and then literally transformed back to the Prince.

Neither missionaries nor the rest of us generally have such a directly allegorical alteration in our exterior as a result of our interior change. Nonetheless, we all have experiences that parallel the Beast's—times when we change in our identity or our beliefs, and suddenly we see everyone and everything around us with new eyes. These experiences transition the change from inside to outside, and alter our whole world as a result.

Defining Transitional Interaction

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the Narrative Inquiry lens of Interaction, or Sociality, is generally considered to include both the internal circumstances of the individual (Intrapersonal Interaction) and the social conditions in which they experience the world (Interpersonal Interaction). Early on in seeking to understand the narrative themes present in missionaries' stories of the journey toward greater resilience, I realized there were many stories that I was having a hard time categorizing as either Intrapersonal or Interpersonal because actually they were both— like the Beast, missionaries are affected in both external and internal ways. In addition to these being stories of both Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Interaction, there was

almost always a movement from inner to outer—these were stories of self-change

which led to a change in the approach to others or to the outside world. Because of

this movement, I have labeled these as "Transitional Interactions."

In this chapter, the second to look at Interaction, or Sociality, I will examine the

top narrative themes that I consider to be Transitional. Examples from missionary

stories will be given for these themes. A description of the themes will be followed by

a demographic analysis and then a discussion of the ways that Transitional Interactions

support missionaries' resilience, as both they and their relationships with others are

changed.

Transitional Interaction Themes[319]

For missionaries, Transitional Interaction often begins with realization—a growth in awareness of self that shifts them to an awareness of others. First, missionaries describe coming to understand themselves better. That internal experience of self-empathy, in turn, allows them to empathize with others, become more aware of others, or in some other way approach others differently through and because of the lens of self-understanding (n=161, 65.18%). Knowing themselves, many missionaries see others in a new light—this realization often happens in the area of limitations, needs, or values. Some, like this missionary, find new freedom in the vulnerability of this knowledge:

> *My relationship with others has been greatly affected… I have learned to look at people much more through God's eyes. My view of myself has also changed. I had to learn to not look to my strengths, but to trust God and move out, even if I do feel less than adequate, if He is calling. Not always having to do what I do best has given me the openness to fail sometimes and to be successful and blessed at other times. I can be real.*[320]

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[319] In this chapter, only those narrative themes used more than 20% of the time are discussed. Additionally, there were 4 themes and 7 additional sub-themes reported by more than 10% of missionaries who participated in the written interview. Two additional themes and 4 additional sub-themes were used by more than 5% of missionaries.

Transitional Interaction Themes present in between 10% and 20% of missionary stories:
I must Transform in order to Witness (n=46, 18.62%)
I am Growing through Mentoring Others (n=44, 17.81%)
Greater Grace Sub.: Authenticity/Vulnerability (n=43, 17.41% of total, 32.58% of Greater Grace)
I took a Stand against Others because of an internal experience (n=42, 17%)
I am more Patient with Others because of an internal experience (n=41, 16.6%)
Greater Grace Sub.: Love (n=40, 16.19% of total, 30.3% of Greater Grace)
Greater Grace Sub.: Direct Quote (n=32, 12.96% of total, 24.24% of Greater Grace)

For additional information on these less-frequently used themes, including demographic statistical analysis, contact the author at kriss@resilientglobalworker.org.

[320] North American serving in South America for 27 years. (Q84)

The change in understanding others through understanding themselves may also be related to a new realization of strength or gifting. It may also be the case that a growth experience through self-understanding makes a missionary want to encourage others,[321] share the lessons they have learned,[322] or just makes them more "chill"[323] about both themselves and others. There is a flow, from internal understanding to external understanding that affects ministry and/or relationships through both attitudes and action. For example, *"In ministry, I find that I have peace in difficult situations, especially in sudden 'crises.' I can minister from a place of peace and faith. I know that God is going to come through and He is faithful…I feel that those I minister to are strengthened by that faith & peace."*[324]

For a great many missionaries, the internal understanding they experienced led them to having greater grace toward others (n=132, 53.44%): "*I would say that I have become more gracious and understanding towards others in their brokenness, as I have processed through my own.*"[325] "Grace" in this case means that an internal process had caused a missionary to show unmerited (by the receiver) latitude or kindness of

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[321] Australian/New Zealander serving in South Asia for 6 years. (Q245)
Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 25 years. (Q128)

[322] Northern European serving in Middle Africa for 18 years. (Q48)

[323] Western European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q41)
North American serving in Central Asia for 13 years (Q127)
North American serving in Northern Europe for more than 30 years. (Q136)

[324] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southeastern Asia for 8 years. (Q100)

[325] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q42)

some sort toward another.[326] Some missionaries simply said they had "more grace," or "greater grace" toward others (n=32, 12.96%),[327] while others expressed it differently to accentuate different postures of grace like love,[328] authenticity,[329] or openness[330] or actions like listening well,[331] encouraging others,[332] or forgiveness.[333] Some mentioned multiple facets of grace toward others that flowed from an internal change: *"In relationships with others, I've had to learn to receive, to listen better, and to enjoy what is given and not lament what is not! I've come to realize that God can use the most unexpected people to meet needs and that I should receive with grace, make the most of relationships and be willing to be vulnerable."*[334]

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[326] Originally, I found 10 motifs that fit under the broader category of Transitional Interaction. As examination of narrative themes progressed, it became clear that the theme of "Greater Grace Toward Others" had become too broad a category, as I was using it to describe everything that I would consider to be an aspect of "grace." For example, it included those who mentioned a growth in hospitality or openness toward others (n=29), those who expressed greater "love" for others (n=40), and those who directly used the phrases "more grace," "greater grace," and so on (n=32). Because of this, I decided to break down the "Greater Grace Toward Others" narrative theme into 14 more detailed motifs, to differentiate between categories of "grace." This allowed for more precision, as this split resulted in 403 incidences of these various themes apparent in participants' stories.

[327] See, for example: "I am also less expectant of perfection in others and have more grace for not just myself, but also others." Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q57)

[328] North American serving in Western Africa for 28 years. (Q165)

[329] Northern European serving in South America for 17 years. (Q141)

[330] North American serving in multiple locations for 12 years. (Q37)

[331] Australian/New Zealander serving in Central Asia for 3 years. (Q97)

[332] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q129)

[333] Western European serving in Western Europe for 6 years. (Q45)

[334] Northern European serving in South America for 17 years. (Q65)

Two types of Greater Grace toward others were described more than 20% of the time by missionaries.**335**   For many, some internal experience gave them the ability to understand or identify with others as a result of a self-change (n=51, 20.65% of total, 38.64% of Greater Grace). I would further define this as a growth in empathy—the ability to look over the shoulder of the other person and see the world through a new perspective.336 Frequently this ability/effort to understand the other person's vantage point resulted in putting empathy into practice in order to treat others differently or better: "*I have made better relationships by accommodating different people and just looking at others through the eyes of Christ.*"337

As they grow to understand and empathize with others, many missionaries also grow in their ability to receive others as they are. Unsurprisingly, given the prevalence of acceptance as a theme in Intrapersonal Interactions, many missionaries described growing acceptance of others as a result of an internal change (n=51, 20.65% of total respondents, 38.64% of Greater Grace [GG]). As they grew in resilience, missionaries

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335 In addition to the themes which were over 20%, 4 sub-themes were used between 2.43% and 7.69% of the time, and 8 were used between 9.72% and 20% of the time.

Sub-themes of Greater Grace Toward Others reported more than 9.72% of the time:
GG: Authenticity/Vulnerability (n=43, 17.41%)
GG: Love for Others (n=40, 16.19%)
GG: Direct Quote (n=32, 12.96%)
GG: More Open/Hospitable to Others (n=29, 11.74%)
GG: I Reset my Expectations of Others (n=28, 11.34%)
GG: I Listen more/better to Others (n=27, 10.93%)
GG: I Give Others the Freedom to Choose (n=26, 10.53%)
GG: I Extend Forgiveness to Others (n=24, 9.72%)

336 See, for example: "It has caused me to see them through different eyes, and not my own perspectives." North American serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q42)

337 Eastern African serving in Eastern Africa for 8 years. (Q163)

were more able to accept others as they are,[338] accept their foibles,[339] or accept the

need to work with or on behalf of others.[340] This move toward accepting others was

often based in first accepting themselves:

> *The stresses just kept hammering my family and me. I could not keep the illusion intact….I was not ENOUGH. Then GOD began to rebuild my theology about suffering and broken-ness, I soon realized He was ENOUGH. He loved me. He carried me. It was not about my performance. This realization has now carried over into my relationships. They are not enough either! So do I share grace with them because He shared grace with me? Surely.[341]*

Growth in grace toward others does not mean, however, that missionaries have

given up their own values or the pursuit of healthy relationships. We see this in the

emergence of self-advocacy as an important skill of Transitional Interaction for

missionaries as they grow in resilience (n=139, 56.28%). Having had some kind of

contemplative component of realization, many missionaries were moved to speak up

for themselves.[342] They recognized a need and chose to act—to do something to seek

help rather than passively waiting for it to come to them.[343] Often missionaries had

realizations of their own personal strength, the need to stand up for themselves, or the

connection to accepting who they are and what they need in order to pursue meeting

those needs.[344] Practicing self-advocacy is not a static trait which they either have or

don't have; rather, it's a skill in which they can grow:

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[338] Eastern Asian serving in Southeastern Asia for 8 years. (Q217)

[339] North American serving in Central America for 24 years. (Q144)

[340] North American serving in Southern Asia for more than thirty years. (Q246)

[341] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q129)

[342] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 17 years. (Q52)

[343] North American serving in Western Europe for 9 years. (Q32)

[344] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 13 years. (Q29)

I also realize that looking back to some of the really traumatic situations, today I feel much stronger and would be able to react differently and not take it so personal but to be able to see what my part in the story was and what was the hurts and shortcomings in the life of the other person. It has made me more resilient and I am not taking everything on me, blaming myself and feeling really hurt and vulnerable. At the same time I know that I am sometimes surprising people with my honesty and vulnerability, always hoping that it will help them to be as honest and vulnerable.[345]

In addition to being led by internal changes to understand others better and have more grace for them, yet advocate for themselves, sometimes missionaries become more aware of their own need to reach out—they realize that they need others (n=106, 42.91%). As missionaries told their stories of increasing in resilience, sometimes they simply said they felt the need to ask for and/or receive help:[346]

My relationship with others is very important. My message as I currently mobilize the church to be more missional is that, "If God has not called you to become a missionary, then be sure that He has called you to send a Missionary"...I strongly therefore believe that as a missionary I am never successful alone, I need Aarons and Moseses (the church) to lift my hands and lift God's banner up so that battle may be won.[347]

Sometimes missionaries realized a specific need for a particular intervention to help them make a change. Frequently, missionaries who told stories of accepting themselves and advocating for themselves described the growing awareness of their need for others as a part of that process:

As I was going through counseling and healing I still felt called into full-time ministry, and God showed me my need for people who will minister to me…They are still supporting me, and I have seen and felt a huge difference from when I

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[345] Western European serving in South Asia for 18 years. (Q164)

[346] North American serving in Central America for 6 years. (Q4)

[347] Eastern African serving in Eastern Africa for 19 years. (Q109) Lightly edited for clarity.

did not have them in my first 5 years of service and now that they are part of my team these last 5 1/2 years of service.[348]

Demographic Analysis: Transitional Interaction

CD-RISC Score Group

For five out of six Transitional Interaction themes,[349] there is either a direct correlation or a general trend upward in use with CD-RISC score. The exception is the theme of practicing self-advocacy; in that theme, although there is no pattern in terms of CD-RISC score, all groups use this theme at least 52% of the time. This firmly ties an increase in reporting inner change that leads to outer change to resilience scores.

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[348] North American serving in the Caribbean for 11 years. (Q111)

[349] Six Main Transitional Interaction Themes:
Greater Awareness of Self Leads to Greater Awareness of Others
Practicing Self-Advocacy
Greater Grace Toward Others
Greater Grace Toward Others in the form of Understanding/Empathy
Greater Grace Toward Others in the form of Acceptance
Awareness of the need for others.

Age

When we examine how different generations report Transitional Interaction as a support to resilience, there is an interesting split. The themes of greater grace toward others (general), greater grace toward others through acceptance, and greater awareness of self which leads to a greater awareness of others, show either direct correlations or a general trend upward with age. On the other hand, the themes of practicing self-advocacy and growth in awareness of the need for others show a direct negative correlation.[350] Further study would be needed to see if there are generational-culture issues at play that keep older missionaries from expressing a need and/or practicing self-advocacy, or at least from describing doing so.

Length of Service

Both themes that have a negative correlation to age are least likely to be used by those who served in the field for thirty or more years, marking a connection. In terms of other patterns within the experience groups, the picture seems a bit more complex, with no correlations or negative correlations and only one theme (greater grace through acceptance) showing a general trend upward and one (practicing self-advocacy) showing a general trend downward.

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[350] Greater grace in terms of empathy or understanding shows no pattern.

Transitional Interaction Themes	Most Likely to Use are those in the field for:	Least Likely to Use are those in the field for:
Greater Awareness of Self Leads to Greater Awareness of Others	20-29 years	5-9 years
Practicing Self-Advocacy	5-9 years	≥30 years
Greater Grace Toward Others	20-29 years	5-9 years
GG—Acceptance	≥30 years	≤4 years
GG: Empathy/ Understanding	≤4 years	5-9 years
Awareness of Need For Others	≤4 years	≥30 years

Missionaries who had served for four or fewer years were most likely to describe Greater Grace through Empathy and an Awareness of their Need for Others, and they were least likely to describe Greater Grace through Acceptance. Those who had served for 5-9 years were most likely to talk about Practicing Self-Advocacy and least likely to say their greater self-awareness led to greater other-awareness, general greater grace toward others, and greater grace in the form of empathy. Those who had served for 10-19 years were neither the most likely nor least likely to use any themes. Those who served for 20-29 years were not least likely to use any theme, and they were the most likely to talk about the movement from greater self-awareness to greater other-awareness and general greater grace. Those missionaries who served for thirty or more years were the most likely to describe greater grace with others in the form of acceptance.

Years in Field	Number of Themes this Group is Most Likely to Use.	Number of Themes this Group is Least Likely to Use.
<4	2	1
5-9	1	3
10-19	0	0
20-29	2	0
>30	1	2

The predominant use of the themes of practicing self-advocacy, Greater Grace for others in terms of Empathy, and the Awareness of the Need for Others by missionaries early in their career and not later in their career may show that these are Transitional Interactions that missionaries lean on more in the earlier days of their field service. Conversely, I suspect that increasing self- and other-awareness, having greater grace toward others, and experiencing acceptance of others may be skills that grow over time.

Gender

In terms of gender, women are more likely to use all of these themes except greater grace in the form of acceptance (which men are 4.1% more likely to use). Four out of six of these narrative motifs show margins greater than 5%.[351] Again, it is hard to say if women are having more experiences with these Transitional Interactions or are simply more likely to report them; I suspect that there is a connection between Transitional Interactions and the types of self-understanding that women were more

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[351] Greater grace in terms of empathy is only 2.33% more likely to be used by women.

likely to show in their Intrapersonal Interactions. Men were more likely to describe acceptance of others.

Number of Fields of Service

I suspect that the fewer number of themes in the category is responsible for the lack of real trends in the number of fields in which a missionary served and reports of Transitional Interaction. Interestingly, there is a negative correlation between reports of greater awareness of self which leads to greater awareness of others and the number of fields. (Those who serve in more than two fields are least likely to describe this phenomenon.) This one finding is notable, however, for those involved in making decisions about whether a missionary should stay in the field, leave the field, or switch fields; greater support in the area of self-awareness may improve overall relationships for an individual.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have defined Transitional Interactions and explored some of these themes in which a missionary experienced an internal change that led to a change in relationships. I have also offered a demographic analysis. The strongest trend in terms of these themes is found in CD-RISC scores—higher scores are found alongside more frequent reports of supportive Transitional Interactions. There are also some implications within the demographic analysis for supporting missionaries differently throughout their career-span.

What can we learn from missionaries' stories of growth in resilience in terms of Transitional Interactions? I see two main takeaways:

First of all, it is notable that this type of sociality is present in so many missionaries' stories. While I am not qualified to make general statements in terms of psychology or sociology, I can say that in these stories the movement from internal to

external is distinct and directly stated.[352] Missionaries themselves take note of the fact

that they changed something, or something changed, in terms of their Intrapersonal

Interactions, and this new way of being led directly to a change in Interpersonal

Interactions.

Secondly, having learned from stories of Intrapersonal Interaction that the life of

resilience is a life of acceptance, I believe that we see in Transitional Interactions that

the life of resilience is also a life of empathy. Empathy for others begins (as was

mentioned in the previous chapter) for many missionaries with self-empathy—an

internal understanding of themselves or realization of their own need for grace, help,

and acceptance. From that internal change flows empathy for others.

I'm reminded of when I first got glasses—up until I was seven, I had no idea that

it was even possible for me to read road signs from the car, or tell who people were

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[352] Additional examples of this inner—> relationship change:

"I am closer to God, trust in Him, and am growing in believing that He loves me as I am and his Approval is not based on my performance. My relationship with others has more grace than it used to, and I long to love others less based on how they behave and more just because they are."
—North American serving in Southern Asia for 17 years. (Q34)

"I have so much more compassion for those outside the church than I used to. I can empathize more. I can hear "How can there be a good God when…" and not feel threatened by the question. Because I have shouted it at God too, and ultimately discovered that he still IS."
— North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 17 years. (Q52)

"I have become less focussed on striving for perfection in life and ministry, and more focussed on my relationship with God and with others… I am also less expectant of perfection in others and have more grace for not just myself, but also others."
—Australian/New Zealander serving in Australia/New Zealand for 8 years. (Q74)

"So we have come to know more of our frailty but also more of His goodness and nearness and as a result are more able to extend those same graces to others along the way."
—North American serving in Southern Asia for 23 years. (Q82)

"So I suppose that links well into learning and continuing to explore 'grace' - God's grace and acceptance of me - as I am….He really loves and accepts us. So I also need to extend grace not just to myself - but also to colleagues and newer workers who may be deep in culture shock /early adjustments. Being in missions has helped me to be far more acceptable of others and less judgmental."
—Northern European serving in Northern Africa for 30 years. (Q86)

from a distance. Then, suddenly, when I put on my new glasses, I could really see. A

whole new world opened up to me. Resilient missionaries put on the glasses of self-

empathy, and it changes how they see others, inviting them to offer the same

understanding and grace that they themselves have received.

CHAPTER 8:

INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION

Introduction

What if our greatest stress is also our greatest support?

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."
Ecclesiastes 4: 12

Ever since the data from the ReMAP I was published in 1997,[353] the "common knowledge" in the missionary community has been that the number one preventable reason for missionary attrition is conflict/problems with peers. It is an unshakeable belief in some quarters that "missionaries leave because of other missionaries."[354] There have been some efforts in recent years to explain the actual data found in the

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[353] Taylor, William, *Too Valuable to Lose*

[354] Literally two days ago, the Executive Director of the mission agency where I currently work in missionary training said in a staff meeting, "Everybody knows—what's the old saying?—the biggest reason missionaries leave is other missionaries!" Both my husband and I have also, anecdotally, heard this time and time again in discussions with both missionaries and member care workers.

ReMAP better to put inter-missionary conflict in perspective,[355] and certainly the

ReMAP II found that "teams can be a source of conflict, but are also a source of

support."[356] Nevertheless, there is a persistent belief for many that the greatest

adversity missionaries face—the number one reason missionaries leave the field—is

other missionaries.[357]

Recent research shows that, while conflict is certainly a factor in missionaries'

choices to leave the field, there are many other factors that contribute.[358] At times,

there are other team-related or agency-related issues that lead a missionary to leave

the field, but even these are not necessarily the monolithic experience. In the initial

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[355] See, for example, the excellent treatment in the popular missionary blog A Life Overseas: Craig Thompson, "Is Conflict with Teammates Really the Top Reason for Missionaries Leaving the Field?". *A Life Overseas* blog. Published July 28, 2017. Available at https://www.alifeoverseas.com/is-conflict-with-teammates-really-the-top-reason-for-missionaries-leaving-the-field/

[356] *Worthkeeping,* 177.

[357] See, for example:
Paul Akin, "The number one reason missionaries leave the field," *Baptist Press,* published June 6, 2017, available at https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/the-number-one-reason-missionaries-leave-the-field/

In a workshop entitled, "Conflict Incompetence and the Costs No One Ever Talks About" at MissioNexus Mission Leaders Conference, this trope was repeated again, citing the Akin article. This myth is pernicious. However, the presenter did mention Sears' research (see note below) and admitted that conflict with other missionaries had been "downgraded but still important."

[358] Sears, "Top Reasons for Missionary Attrition."
Ms. Sears did an online survey with 739 former missionary participants. Having assessed the strength of reasons missionaries left the field (using both the percentage who reported and the degree to which they reported it affected their decision to leave the field), Ms. Sears' top identified reasons for missionary attrition are as follows:
1. I felt that I had a new call to something back in my home country.
2. I experienced burnout.
3. I received too little missionary care.
4. I, my spouse, or my child suffered from anxiety.
5. I, my spouse, or my child suffered from depression.
6. I felt that some of my team members/leaders lacked integrity.
7. I did not feel at liberty to pursue my passion and all within the team/agency that I was a part of.
8. I wanted to be close to my aging/ailing parents.
9. There was conflict on the team.

findings of the Resilient Global Worker Study,[359] it was certainly true that conflict with co-workers was the most frequently listed stressor—but it was also true that support from co-workers was the most frequently listed support.[360]

As you will see below, in the written interviews missionaries also describe this duality—interpersonal conflict is the most frequent counter-narrative found in this research. AND missionaries are most likely to report other missionaries as supportive to them in their resilience journey. In other words, other missionaries are perhaps one of the greatest stresses but definitely one of the greatest supports missionaries experience. In this chapter, I will show the nuances to this duality—particularly in the ways that others support missionaries, but also in the ways that conflict affects these core relationships.

Interpersonal Interaction as "How" and "Who"

Those narrative themes categorized as Interpersonal Interaction, or Interpersonal Sociality, deal with relationships between the missionary and others. As I categorize them, Interpersonal Interactions are primarily differentiated from Transitional Interactions by being *received* interactions: Where Transitional Interactions begin internally and then become external, Interpersonal Interactions begin externally (as another person connects with the storyteller in some way) and may become internal.

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[359] Both Ms. Sears' work and the RGWS involved missionaries directly, compared to the ReMAP studies, which asked mission agency leaders why missionaries left the field. This makes both these sets of research more robust when looking at missionaries' relationships with each other.

[360] Whiteman, et al, "Preliminary Findings," 71.

Both the second question set (which specifically asked missionaries who has been

supportive and how) and the first question set (which asked about the change in

relationship with others as the missionary grows in resilience) directly address

Interpersonal Interaction.[361] This is likely one of the reasons there are so many (varied)

narrative themes used by missionaries relating back to this external sociality.

Because the original survey questions ask both who was helpful and what they

did to be supportive, my initial division of these narrative themes was into the two

categories of "who" and "how." Additionally, I find it helpful to break down the question

of "Who is helpful?" into supportive relationships connected to the passport country,

supportive relationships connected to the service country, and supportive relationships

that can be connected to either. In looking at "How are others helpful?" I have broken

these narrative themes into smaller groups as well: Companions for the Journey,

Wisdom to Help Me Grow, Help from Home, and Help in Special Circumstances.

In this chapter, I will describe Interpersonal Interaction themes found in more

than 20% of missionaries' stories, addressing both who is helpful and how they are

helpful. These themes will be exemplified in quotes from missionaries. Then I will give

a brief demographic analysis for these themes. Before ending with a discussion, I will

describe the predominant counter-narrative found in these Interpersonal Interactions.

Overall, I will be showing that, contrary to long-standing belief within the mission

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[361] Q1: **Overall, how has your life changed as you have become more resilient?** *…How about your relationship with others? Your view of yourself?*

Q2: **As you remember your missionary experience, who specifically stands out as supportive?** *What was their function or role in your life? At what point and for how long did they come alongside you? What did they do to support you?*

community, missionaries receive far more support from others, including other

missionaries, than they do stress.

Interpersonal Interaction Themes: Who is Helpful?[362]

In order to understand Interpersonal Interaction as a support to missionaries' growth in resilience, it is first important to know who is helpful to missionaries. These are the core relationships whose contribution sustains and encourages missionaries–the people who help make their lives in the field possible. As I was examining who is helpful, I realized that there are key relationships with people right there with the missionary, with people back in the passport country, and with people whose location changes or who connect with the missionary online.

WHO—Located in Service Country

Missionaries received a great deal of support from people who were present in

the field with them (n=179, 72%).[363] This is where the support of other missionaries

truly shines: Almost half of missionaries describe receiving support from other people

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[362] This section describes those who were listed as being helpful by 19% or more of missionaries. An additional 5 people/sets of people were described as being helpful by missionaries between 8.91% and 16.6% of the time:
Supporters (n=41, 16.6%)
Organizational Member Care (n=41, 16.6%)
A Network of Helpful People (n=39, 15.79%)
Pastor in Passport Country (n=26, 10.53%)
A Core Team of Intentional Emotional/Prayer Support (n=22, 8.91%)

[363] 179 missionaries cited support **either** from other missionaries, other missionaries on their team, their spouses, or local friends/colleagues.

who were working cross-culturally for the sake of the gospel (n=110, 44.53%).[364]

These could be people working on the same team (n=47, 19.03%), with the same

organization, or missionaries from other organizations. The key was often the ability to

understand the missionary's particular circumstances, especially the process of

working in a culture different from one's passport country, in ways that were helpful:

"For us, our greatest support has come from teammates or other missionary friends on

different fields. Their "get it" factor and trusted friendship has enabled them to speak

life, truth, and comfort like few others."[365]

In addition to other cross-cultural workers in more general terms, many

missionaries received significant support from their spouses (n=68, 27.53%). For these

respondents, their work in the field may have been an opportunity to have

adventures[366] or to fulfill a mutual calling together.[367] For some, putting their marriage

first and then operating from that safe base has allowed for ministry to flourish.[368]

Often, there was a tie between the difficult things faced by a couple and feeling closer

or more deeply connected. For example: *"My relationship with my husband has always*

been good, but together we have grown in our relationship with God and have walked

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[364] This is in line with earlier analysis of the Resilient Missionary Study: Survey Portion, which found that other missionaries are BOTH one of the greatest supports and one of the greatest stressors for missionaries.

[365] North American serving in Eastern Europe for 19 years. (Q234)

[366] North American serving in multiple locations for 25 years. (Q80)

[367] Northern European serving in South Eastern Asia for 27 years. (Q113)

[368] Western European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years (Q41).
North American serving in South America for more than 30 years. (Q107)
North American serving in Central Asia for 8 years. (Q61)

together through some pretty intense times. I see Jesus in my husband and feel closer to him."[369]

Finally, in the field many missionaries felt supported by relationships with people from the service country (n=65, 26.32%). These local people may be colleagues in the work the missionary is doing,[370] they may be cultural informants/guides,[371] or they may simply be helpful friends who express care for the missionary.[372] In many stories, the missionary would mention practical and emotional help from these national friends.[373] For example:

> *I most frequently found support and fulfillment among my native friends who were either believers or with whom I was actively sharing Christ. They provided friendship and encouragement on a daily basis, and they regularly taught me a tremendous deal about my faith, host culture, and grace. In all the places we've served, they were with me from the beginning to the end of our tenure.*[374]

WHO—Variable Location

Not every supportive Interpersonal relationship is located in the missionary's country of service. Located in the missionary's passport country, service country, or

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[369] North American serving in Central America for 9 years. (Q159)

[370] North American serving in South America for 6 years. (Q19)
Australian/New Zealander serving in Central America for 17 years. (Q79)

[371] Australian/New Zealander serving in South America for 19 years. (Q149)

[372] Western European serving in North America for 25 years. (Q106)

[373] See also Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Africa for 13 years. (Q63)

[374] North American serving in Western Asia for 6 years. (Q168)

other nearby place (for example, a regional leadership office), a safe leader[375] was

foundational to support for many missionaries (n=90, 36.44%). "Safe" leaders really

know missionaries[376] and help them feel protected,[377] respected,[378] or otherwise

emotionally secure.[379] Although encouraging missionaries[380] is an important part of

their role, safe leaders also challenge missionaries to grow, be accountable, and reach

for deeper ministry to others.[381] Missionaries can come to safe leaders to share

difficulties without fear,[382] and they believe that their leaders will listen to them.[383] A

safe leader can be someone higher in the organization,[384] particularly a vision-caster

for the group, but is often an immediate supervisor.[385] For example: *"A supervisor who*

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[375] For additional information on key facets of supportive leadership, see also Whiteman, "Supporting Today's Global Workers Toward Missional Resilience"

[376] North American serving in Southern Europe for 19 years. (Q247)
 North American serving in Eastern Africa for 7 years. (Q184)
North American serving in Southern Europe for 8 years. (Q89)
Australian/New Zealander serving in South Asia for 6 years. (Q90)

[377] South African serving in Southeastern Asia for 9 years. (Q201)
Northern European serving in Southern Asia for 9 years. (Q176)

[378] North American serving in Southern Europe for 19 years. (Q2470

[379] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q211)

[380] North American serving in Western Europe for 21 years. (Q182)
Northern European serving in Northern America for 7 years. (Q167)

[381] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 7 years. (Q184)
Northern European serving in Northern America for 7 years. (Q167)
North American serving in Western Europe for 21 years. (Q182)

[382] North American serving in Eastern Europe for more than 30 years. (Q240)

[383] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Asia for 17 years. (Q230)

[384] Eastern Asian serving in Southeastern Asia for 8 years. (Q217)

[385] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q211)
North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 22 years. (Q203)
North American serving in Eastern Africa for 7 years. (Q184)

oversees all of the CCWs. She was a champion for us and truly admired and respected us although she was our 'boss'."[386]

Missionaries also received help from those who had served for longer terms or had served before them—veteran missionaries (n=70, 28.34%). These experienced peers may have offered practical help[387] or emotional support.[388] They also may have been cultural guides.[389] Veteran missionaries offered so much support to missionaries that they could even be thought of as a self-contained "school of missions."[390] Sometimes missionaries were supported by this interpersonal relationship in the field,[391] but sometimes it was after their service or separate from it: *"After every term we had a debriefing with somebody experienced in the mission context and certified as counselor; this was really good to look back, reflect, make sense out of why we felt tired and worn out and helping setting off in the right direction."*[392]

It is important to note that missionaries also benefit from relationships with people who are (often but not always) outside the field,[393] and even outside the missions world.[394] For many missionaries, the professional support from a counselor or mental health professional made a huge difference in their resilience journey (n=49,

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[386] North American serving in Southern Asia for 25 years. (Q152)

[387] Northern European serving in South America for 17 years. (Q65)

[388] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q77)

[389] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 28 years. (Q122)

[390] Northern European serving in South Eastern Asia for 27 years. (Q113)

[391] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southeastern Asia for 8 years. (Q100)

[392] Western European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q41)

[393] North American serving in Southern Europe for 8 years. (Q89)

[394] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southeastern Asia for 7 years. (Q170)

19.84%). Like the helpful veteran missionaries, counselors and mental health

professionals may be working with missionaries in the field,[395] or they may offer

debriefing,[396] renewal retreats,[397] or ongoing psychological care outside the field.[398]

WHO—Located in Passport Country

Several categories of people in the missionaries' passport countries are also

extremely helpful to the resilience journey. As one would expect, family back in the

passport country is an important support (n=80, 32.39%). These close ties to people

who have known the missionary their whole lives can be important as they affirm

calling,[399] pray,[400] and sometimes visit the field.[401] Although practical support from

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[395] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 17 years. (Q140)

[396] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q160)

[397] North American serving in Middle Africa for 19 years. (Q56)

[398] North American serving in the Caribbean for 8 years. (Q133)

[399] Australian/New Zealander serving in Western Europe for 15 years. (Q117)
North American serving in Western Europe for 3 years. (Q98)
North American serving in South America for 29 years. (Q92)
Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q78)

[400] North American serving in the Caribbean for 11 years. (Q111)
Australian/New Zealander serving in Southeastern Asia for 8 years. (Q100)
North American serving in Western Europe for 3 years. (Q98)

[401] North American serving in the Caribbean for 11 years. (Q111)
North American serving in multiple locations for 25 years. (Q80)

family was important,[402] often just listening[403] to the missionary or offering a bit of wise

advice,[404] was just as vital in supporting their journey of resilience. Multiple

missionaries described families who didn't really "get it" but who offered deeply

appreciated support anyway: *My parents always helped me in every practical way they*

could. They support my life choices even though they do not share my life goals."[405]

Missionaries also received significant support from their church communities

back "home" (n=61, 24.7%). This support may have overlapped with the support

received from pastors (n=26, 10.53%), but most of the time was related to the church

body itself.[406] Like family members, church brothers and sisters could confirm

calling,[407] pray,[408] offer encouragement,[409] and give practical material resources.[410]

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[402] Western European serving in Western Europe for 6 years. (Q45)
North American serving in the Caribbean for 11 years. (Q111)
North American serving in South America for 29 years. (Q92)
Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q78)

[403] North American serving in Western Europe for 3 years. (Q98)
Australian/New Zealander serving in Central Asia for 3 years. (Q97)
North American serving in Eastern Europe for 9 years. (Q51)

[404] North American serving in the Caribbean for 11 years. (Q111)
North American serving in Eastern Europe for 9 years. (Q51)

[405] Western European serving in Western Europe for 6 years. (Q45)
See also North American serving in Western Africa for 11 years. (Q101)
South American serving in Eastern Europe for 17 years. (Q50)
 Western European serving in Western Europe for 6 years. (Q45)

[406] Only 9 participants described supportive relationships with both the pastor and the church.

[407] Australian/New Zealander serving in Northern Europe for 6 years. (Q137)

[408] Western European serving in Northern Europe for 18 years. (Q103)
West African serving in Western Africa for 9 years. (Q44)
North American serving in Northern Europe for 9 years. (Q35)

[409] North American serving in South America for more than 30 years. (Q107)
North American serving in Northern Europe for 9 years. (Q35)
North American serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q26)

[410] West African serving in Western Africa for 9 years. (Q44)

Sometimes members of the home-church offered regular financial support to the

missionary's work;[411] they also helped missionaries with housing or cars or childcare or

food during furlough,[412] or even visited the field with short term teams or other help.[413]

Although there is some overlap with the home church, missionaries separately

described friends from their passport country as providing supportive Interpersonal

Interactions in their resilience journey (n=84, 34.01%). These friends were helpful in

similar ways to other groups. They prayed,[414] offered encouragement,[415] helped with

furlough,[416] and sometimes visited the field.[417] One notable difference from other

relationships in the passport country is that when describing their friendships at home,

missionaries might mention mutuality.[418] Whether from a position of shared investment

in each other or a more one-way relationship, friends in the passport country were a

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[411] Supporters were reported separately as a source of support (n=41, 16.6%). 19 respondents
described both financial supporters and support from the church in their passport country.
See also North American serving in Eastern Africa for 3 years. (Q125)
Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q219)
North American serving in Western Europe for 3 years. (Q98)

[412] Western European serving in Northern Europe for 18 years. (Q103)
North American serving in Northern Europe for 9 years. (Q35)

[413] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q26)
Northern European serving in Southern Europe for 6 years. (Q62)
North American serving in Eastern Africa for 3 years. (Q125)

[414] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 4 years. (Q112)
Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Asia for 6 years. (Q245)

[415] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 4 years. (Q112)
North American serving in Southern Europe for 17 years. (Q248)

[416] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 4 years. (Q112)
Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 25 years. (Q128)

[417] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 25 years. (Q128)
Northern European serving in Southern Europe for 6 years. (Q62)
North American serving in Eastern Africa for 4 years. (Q112)

[418] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Asia for 6 years. (Q245)

significant source of long-term support for many: "*A good friend in the passport country was a real encouragement to keep ongoing. He did ask the good questions and did create a room to be honest and vulnerable….The support and contact is ongoing, but in difficult times it was more often that we did talk and pray…*"[419]

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[419] Western European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q41)
See also Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Asia for 6 years. (Q245)

Demographic Analysis: Who is Supportive?

Length of Service

Unsurprisingly, over time there is a general trend downward in missionaries' descriptions of receiving support from people in the passport country. This same pattern holds true for receiving help from counselors or other mental health professionals and family in the passport country. There is a direct negative correlation between reports of help from the church in the passport country and time in the field. In other words, the longer missionaries are in the field the less likely they are to describe receiving help from "home." There are two themes which missionaries are generally more likely to use the longer they are in the field: receiving helpful support from their spouses, and receiving helpful support from other missionaries. Both these sets of trends make sense logically—one would expect that over the years missionaries would draw away from people back in the passport country and draw closer to people in the field.

Age

Because age is often connected to time in the field, it is unsurprising that this same drawing away-drawing toward seems to happen with age: There is a direct negative correlation with reports of help from friends and church and a general trend downward in reports of help from family in the passport country. There was a general trend upward in reports of spouses as important supports. The biggest difference between evaluation of missionaries' stories based on age and years in the field is in the area of receiving help from a counselor or other mental health professional—there was

a direct negative correlation (rather than just a general trend downward) in this kind of description in relation to age. There was a notably narrow range of 7% between the different age groups and descriptions of the importance of a safe leader. To sum up, the older they get, the less likely missionaries are to rely on counselors or people in their passport country, and the more likely they are to rely on their spouses. Everyone, no matter what age, benefits from having a safe leader.

Gender

Overall, women were more likely than men to describe specific people who were helpful to them. (See chart below.) There were only two themes (Supportive Spouse, Supportive Safe Leader) that men were more likely to use than women were, and each of these was by 1% or less. Women were more likely to use all other themes, though two of these themes (supportive local friends, supportive veteran missionaries) were by 1% or less. Women described 5 out of 9 of these categories of supportive relationships by 12% or more than men did. It is impossible to say whether this difference is because women are, in fact, in more supportive relationships, or that men are less likely to report such relationships. I suspect that both are true—particularly for men from North America, the idea of the missionary as a rugged individual who solves all his own problems may block the formation of some relationships for some men, or it may make them less likely to describe such relationships.

	Number of themes used ≤1% more frequently	Number of themes used ≥12% more frequently	Total

W^M: Women used theme more than Men did	2	5	7
M^W: Men used theme more than Women did	2	0	2
Total	4	5	9

Number of Fields in Which a Missionary Served

In terms of the number of fields in which a missionary served, the range of people who said that they had supportive interpersonal interactions with other missionaries was very narrow (1.87%)—whether a missionary served in one field, two fields, or more than two fields, they were almost equally likely to describe such a relationship. Overall, as can be seen in the chart below, those who served in one field were likely to fall in the middle or be the most likely to describe a particular supportive relationship, while those who served in more than two fields were more likely to fall at the low end. In other words, missionaries who served in one field cited lots of helpful relationships, those serving in more than two fields cited fewer, and those serving in two fields fell in between.[420]

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[420] There were two times that ties showed up in the data, which is why there are 11 relationships listed in the high part of the chart and only 7 in the middle.

	Number of themes **least** likely to use	Number of themes **second most/least** likely to use	Number of themes **most** likely to use
Missionary served in more than 2 fields	5	1	3
Missionary served in 2 fields	3	2	4
Missionary served in 1 field	1	4	4

Additionally, there was a direct correlation between number of fields of service and the likelihood that missionaries would say they received loving support from friends in the passport country. Intuitively, I would say this is because they are maintaining relationships at home rather than trying to build relationships in multiple locations. (It would be interesting to know whether those who served in more than two locations would have answered differently when they had only served in one place.) There was a negative correlation between citing supportive relationships with local colleagues/friends and the number of fields in which a missionary worked. Again, this connection makes intuitive sense—I would assume that serving in more fields cuts down the time (and possibly emotional energy) that a missionary has to build deep relationships with local people.

CD-RISC Score Groups

In terms of CD-RISC scores, there were no direct correlations, no direct negative correlations, and no general trends upward or downward. The lack of pattern here is significant, as basically every other category of narrative theme has had some connection to CD-RISC score. It is notable that those scoring in the Lowest group

were the least likely to describe 6 out of 9 of these types of supportive relationships.

Whether they are less likely to have such relationships or just less likely to describe

them is impossible to say.

Interpersonal Interaction: How were others helpful?[421]

        In addition to understanding Who is helpful, it is important to understand what exactly they are doing to help–What do helpful Interpersonal Interactions actually look like, according to missionaries? For those who care for or about missionaries, this may be a key section of the research, as it tells us what we might be able to do to support missionaries' resilience journeys. As I looked at these themes, four main categories emerged. Sometimes Interpersonal Interactions were on a peer-to-peer level, involving emotional presence and/or day-to-day connection–these relationships fall into the first category of "Companions for the Journey." Some such interactions were with someone who was further ahead in the process, involving a more experienced/more skilled person who assisted the missionary in their growth–these interactions fall into the second category of "Wisdom to Help Me Grow." Some Interpersonal Interactions are only important in a missionary's life because they have hit some crisis, transition, or key adversity–these themes fall into the third category of "Special Circumstances." And, finally, some supportive Interpersonal Interactions are specific to relationships with those in the passport country–these interactions, of course, are categorized as "Support from Home."

How Were Others Helpful?: As Companions for the Journey[422]

I have spent the last three years officially working in care and training at a very small missions agency. One of the things I have observed is that, while sometimes missionaries need more professional resources (such as a trained counselor), much of the time they simply need someone who will **be** with them in the midst of their lives. This anecdotal observation is backed up in the stories of missionaries in the Resilient Global Worker Study. Though this type of relationship sometimes involves being physically present in-country with missionaries, many of the supportive Interpersonal Interactions that missionaries report as part of their resilience journeys have more to do with emotional presence than physical presence. Emotional presence means making space. In an atmosphere of psychological safety,[423] emotionally-present people listen

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[421] In this chapter, only those narrative themes used more than 20% of the time are discussed.

[422] Missionaries mention other helpful types of Companioning:
Humor/Joy/Fun/Silliness (n=44, 17.81%)
Showed a Good Example (n=26, 10.53%)
Accountability (n=23, 9.31%)

[423] See https://hbr.org/2021/04/what-psychological-safety-looks-like-in-a-hybrid-workplace.

empathetically, encourage and confirm the other, attend to the other's needs, and take

action to meet them through prayer or direct help. I categorize this type of presence in

a missionary's life as being a "Companion for the Journey."

Missionaries are supported by others who will listen empathetically to them

(n=193, 78.14%). This experience may be in a formal or informal setting, and it may

include some form of responsive advice or not; the key characteristic is that

missionaries are able to describe their experience to someone who will allow them to

express themselves in a safe and receptive environment, regardless of what they have

to say: "*I have had a close group of 4 people that sort of formed my support group…*

They are people I can also share the difficult things with and things that are not so good

in our organization."[424]

This idea of safety is important to missionaries—they are supported by

responses of non-judgmental acceptance (n=123, 49.8%) and/or encouragement

(n=120, 48.58%). They find it helpful to express themselves, particularly their negative

feelings or experiences, to people who will not judge them for their shortcomings or

their frustrations: *"I feel like the most support we have been given over the years has*

been through other missionaries and team mates…They tend not to judge, but

understand in a way that many others can not."[425] Missionaries also count on

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[424] Western European serving in Western Europe for more than 30 years. (Q9)

[425] North American serving in Central America for 13 years. (Q27)

encouragement from their leaders,[426] colleagues,[427] friends,[428] and family[429] in the face of what is difficult or discouraging in their lives.

Many times, part of what makes these Interpersonal Interactions supportive is the long-term nature of the relationship (n=193, 78.14%). Missionaries say they really benefit from having people who "journey with them" throughout their field experience, and even after.[430] There is something about the consistency[431] and longevity of these relationships that produces this view of others: "*Sharing the journey, hearing my concerns, knowing and understanding my pain and struggles..come alongside…be encouraging and to pray with and for me."*[432]

There is frequently a spiritual aspect to the support missionaries receive from others through both prayer (n=150, 60.73%) and the confirmation of a missionary's calling (n=100, 40.49%). Prayer and confirmation could be offered by those from home[433] or those in the field.[434] Missionaries described both being prayed for by others and praying together as helpful. In terms of confirmation, missionaries benefitted from someone else affirming that they have skills, personality traits, or some special anointing for the work of cross-cultural ministry. Such stories often involved

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[426] Northern European serving in Southern Europe for 17 years. (Q102)

[427] North American serving in Western Africa for 28 years. (Q216)

[428] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Africa for 13 years. (Q63)

[429] Northern European serving in Southeastern Asia for 27 years. (Q113)

[430] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Asia for 6 years. (Q90)

[431] See, for example: North American serving in Western Europe for 4 years. (Q151)

[432] North American serving in Melanesia for 27 years. (Q162)

[433] Australian/New Zealander serving in South America for 19 years. (Q149)

[434] Western European serving in the Caribbean for 19 years. (Q59)

practical recognition of calling through support for the missionary; confirmation and

prayer both connect to aspects of acceptance and encouragement:[435]

> *Way back in the 1990s I had a wonderful pastor. When I returned home from a discipleship training year with Youth With A Mission…I really wanted to go back and stay in missions. …when I wanted to do another course with YWAM a few years later, he immediately encouraged me to go and the church supported me financially as well. I always felt very loved and appreciated for who I was, both by him and his wife.*[436]

Often, as in the case above, prayer and confirmation of calling were offered in the

midst of long-term relationships as an important aspect of support—knowing that

someone who *really* knows you will be praying for you because they believe in your

calling to the work is powerful.[437]

Although there were times when more formal Interactions were helpful,[438] a lot of

what was helpful to missionaries was informal or non-programmatic time together

(n=152, 61.54%), such as shared meals, coffee, game nights, or even just running into

each other and having a quick chat. These informal get-togethers could be with those

from the same organization, other organizations, or even others who were living cross-

culturally but not in ministry.[439] Sometimes missionaries described these types of

interactions as "living life together" or mentioned other ways that interconnection in the

midst of normal, everyday life leads to greater proactive or responsive resilience (n=60,

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[435] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southern Asia for 19 years. (Q220)

[436] Western European serving in Northern Europe for 18 years. (Q103)

[437] Eastern European serving in South Asia for 4 years. (Q5)

[438] See section below on Counseling and Debriefing.

[439] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 14 years. (Q49)

24.29%). Authenticity and the connection it brought were key to these informal

Interactions.[440]

Related to these moments of living life together, missionaries often benefited

from practical help (n=114, 46.15%) from others. This pragmatic assistance may be in

terms of doing something for a missionary, but more often it is instruction or assistance

that scaffolds for the missionary so that they themselves can learn to do it. Some

stories mention practical help more broadly, while others mention specific tasks that

missionaries received help with. For example, *"I am very thankful for V., an older lady*

who…helped me to adjust to a new language and culture. I could ask her any question,

why things went the way they went. She helped me with practical things, like getting a

new driver's license." [441]

Being Companions on the Journey was not a one-way street. Mutuality, the idea

that both are there for each other—was a key theme for many (n=97, 39.27%). Often

this involved growing together with other missionaries in practical ways but also

spiritual ways.[442] Other missionaries and expats were not the only ones with whom

missionaries had these mutually supportive Interpersonal Interactions; often local

Christians and other open people in the country of service were in give-and-take

relationships with missionaries.[443] For example, *"In (country) there are two women who*

stand out as friends who loved us and taught us so much…The second was a woman

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[440] North American serving in South Asia for 13 years. (Q110)

[441] Western European serving in North America for 25 years. (Q106)

[442] North American serving in South Asia for 9 years. (Q67)

[443] North American serving in South America for more than 30 years. (Q107)

with whom I met weekly for years. Our mutually beneficial relationship helped both of

us understand the culture of the other."[444]

How Were Others Helpful?: Wisdom to Help Me Grow[445]

In addition to benefiting from Interpersonal Interactions of Companioning,

missionaries cited multiple types of Coaching as helpful in their journeys toward

greater resilience (n=165, 66.80%). By "coaching," I mean any mentoring, spiritual

direction, scaffolding, or other nurturing or capacity-building assistance which supports

the thriving and growth of a missionary. The main differentiation between these types of

relationships and Companions is that there is less emphasis on mutuality; generally

speaking, the missionary is receiving from someone else in ways that move them

forward personally or professionally. Though generally Coaching comes from a more

experienced person with a non-professional role in a missionary's life,[446] it may be a

boss who is engaged in this role,[447] often in an extra-professional capacity.[448] In

addition to encouragement and understanding, coaches often challenge or teach to

help missionaries to grow professionally, spiritually, relationally, or personally:

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[444] North American serving in Middle Africa for 27 years. (Q80)

[445] Missionaries mention other helpful types of Coaching:
Cultural Coaching/Advice/Help (n=40, 16.19%)
Coaching from a Trainer/Professor (n=12, 4.86%)
Coaching in Family Life (n=10, 4.05%)
Coaching for Reentry (n=2, .81%)

[446] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 11 years. (Q3)

[447] Southeastern Asian serving in Eastern Asia for 15 years. (Q118)

[448] Western European serving in Western Europe for more than 30 years. (Q9)

> *My friend (name)…When things got bad in my last year, I reached out to her and she didn't need much detail to be there for me…She was honest with love and care! She walked with me during that year…She reminded me of what was true, encouraging me and even prepping me for worst-case scenarios by walking me through it. She has continued to be there for me as a friend and spiritual mentor!*[449]

This broader category can be further separated into sub-themes according to the type of Coaching. Frequently, missionaries mentioned spiritual coaching as supportive to their resilience journey (n=80, 32.39%). Spiritual coaching could come from a spiritual director, pastoral care, or mentoring in the area of spiritual issues and growth. This was generally part of a long-term relationship with someone in the field,[450] someone back in the passport country,[451] or even some other close relationship formed through the mission-discernment process.[452]

Many missionaries also benefited from mentoring—an experienced person helped them when they were less-experienced (n=73, 29.55%).[453] This was one category of coaching that missionaries were more likely to mention receiving from a person more directly associated with their organization, particularly from experienced

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[449] Eastern Asian serving in Southeastern Asia for 8 years. (Q217)

[450] North American serving in Central Asia for 8 years. (Q61)

[451] "My home church's mission pastor when we first went out to the mission field…he was there when we needed him to be there for us…he helped us to normalize what was happening and to keep a long-term perspective on the situation."
    North American serving in South America for 27 years. (Q157)

[452] "My very first supporter was an American man and his wife, who I call my "spiritual parents." They were the first ones to recognize my call to (country) and counsel me, pray with me, support me financially and emotionally."
    South American serving in Eastern Europe for 17 years. (Q50)

[453] The words "mentor" or "mentoring" were specifically used, or a mentor-type relationship which did not fit under other coaching categories was mentioned by these missionaries. Often missionaries directly referred to this as "mentoring" or someone being a "mentor," so the definition of this term is somewhat self-applied. Fifty-four missionaries (21.86%) directly used the word "mentor" in terms of someone else mentoring them.

missionaries (n=74, 29.96%),[454] bosses,[455] or others in the organization (n=71,

28.74%).[456] Some missionaries particularly benefited from organizational coaching that

helped them to do their job better (n=54, 21.86%) through increasing their skills in

leadership, teamwork, or producing better work product.[457]

How Were Others Helpful?: In Special Circumstances[458]

In addition to the ways in which missionaries benefited from having Companions

for the Journey, many missionaries needed, received, and reported support under

special circumstances. First of all, sometimes missionaries described help they

received during a crisis (n=76, 30.77%). Generally speaking, this was a short-term

circumstance[459] and/or acute trauma[460] in which an Interpersonal Interaction increased

their resilience, but it can also be the case that a long-term stressor had suddenly

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[454] "An older single missionary in the area in which we worked, but from another mission group, encouraged me in many ways as a new missionary mother. She shared practical advice, experience, friendship, and willingness to help. Her spiritual life was an example to me as well. From our arrival until her retirement this lady was an encouragement."
    North American serving in Southeastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q15)

[455] "We have had some amazing mentors, but our Area Director (name) is the one that we refer to most often. We have been so blessed by his grace and wisdom form years of ministering in Eastern Europe, and his passion for the Good News of Jesus."
    North American serving in Eastern Europe for more than 30 years. (Q240)

[456] "In a very difficult ministry time, the HR from our sending section was a huge support. She listened, encouraged and was open to discuss all options (including the possibility of us leaving the mission field)."
    Northern European serving in Southern Europe for 17 years. (Q102)

[457] North American serving in Southern Asia for 23 years. (Q82)

458 Missionaries mention other helpful types of support in special circumstances:
Work on our Marriage (n=10, 4.05%)

[459] Northern European serving in Southeastern Asia for 13 years. (Q13)

[460] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 9 years. (Q200)

come to a head. The supportive response may be longer term, but was specifically

tied to this exigent situation. For example:

> *Our Church. When we were pulled from the field, we had to go where there was housing. Where we'd have family support nearby. We ended up in a state where we'd never lived, but they made it home. Brought us meals, included us, gave us space, made no requirements of our time.*[461]

There are also special circumstances where missionaries benefit from

Interpersonal Interactions of debriefing (n=58, 23.48%). This debrief can be after a

traumatic event or difficult situation,[462] but it can also be a regular part of missionary

self-care.[463] Whether as a preventative or responsive aspect of resilience, debriefing is

a time set aside for missionaries to process their experiences, thoughts, feelings,

needs, and expectations while serving outside their passport culture.[464]

Counseling, which tends to be longer term and administered by a mental health

professional, is also often supportive to missionaries in special circumstances (n=55,

22.27%). Sometimes counseling is after the fact, when something difficult has already

happened,[465] and sometimes counseling is the support that missionaries need to

increase their protective-grit in the midst of a tough adversity. Additionally, counseling

can take place in the field in person or by telehealth, or can be undertaken when a

missionary returns to the passport country. Whether in the field or after, during a

difficult time or in response to it, missionaries reported benefitting from this type of

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[461] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 16 years. (Q53)

[462] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q124)

[463] Western European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q41)

[464] North American serving in Western Africa for 11 years. (Q101)

[465] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 7 years. (Q24)

psycho-emotional Interpersonal Interaction: "*I did counseling for the first time. And am now a huge advocate for Christian counseling!*"[466]

How Were Others Helpful?: Support From Home[467]

Finally, there were two ways that missionaries reported others' helpful Interpersonal Interactions from home. Many missionaries directly acknowledged the importance of the financial support they have received as an impact on their resilience journey (n=64, 25.91%). This was sometimes expressed purely in terms of the financial help, but often also included the emotional support that receiving the financial help evoked—much of the time, those who support missionaries financially also think of them, encourage them, confirm their calling, and pray for them on a regular basis. For example: *"Friends and supporters: their trust in my integrity that they would invest financially and prayerfully in my life and ministry, as well as their belief in my sense of calling."*[468]

Finally, a significant number of missionaries described the ways that having visitors from the Passport Country supported their resilience (n=52, 21.05%). Sometimes these were short-term visits from church members who wanted to see and participate in the work.[469] Sometimes they were longer-term visits from family members

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[466] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q77)

[467] Missionaries mention other helpful types of support from home:
Video chats (n=39, 15.79%)
Good Training (n=27, 10.93%

[468] North American serving in multiple regions for 12 years. (Q37)

[469] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q26)

who came to help with some challenging situation.[470] Sometimes friends came just to be with the missionary and to understand their world better.[471] Whoever visited, for however long, and under whatever circumstance, that sense of continuing connection to "home" encouraged missionaries on their resilience journey.

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[470] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southeastern Asia for 7 years. (Q170)

[471] Northern European serving in Eastern Europe for 23 years. (Q186)

Demographic Analysis: How are others helpful?

Length of Service

There are several interesting patterns when it comes to length of service in the field and how others are helpful. First of all, it appears that missionaries at every stage of their career benefit from receiving practical support and from being listened to: Both of these themes have a narrow range of less than 5% between all respondents. This predominance across the years lends extra importance to these two themes.

Secondly, something is happening at the 5-9 year mark for missionaries. At this stage there was a distinct dip in reporting[472] for 12 out of 21 themes of Interpersonal Interaction. For 8 out of those 12 motifs, those serving 5-9 years were the least likely to mention that particular support, while in the other 4 those serving for this length of time are the second least likely to do so. Missionaries who served for 5-9 years at the time of the Written Interview were less likely to describe supportive coaching relationships and help from home, in particular. Half of the time there was a dip in their reporting of companioning supports. They were, however, the most likely to describe helpful Interpersonal Interactions that were related to a crisis, to counseling, and to debriefing.

Although it is not possible from this particular research to say with certainty, my guess would be that this pattern of dips at 5-9 years relates back to how we in the mission-practitioner world do missions. We give lots of support to people who are just starting out, and by the time that people have been in the field for 5 years we think they

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[472] In this dissertation, I am defining a dip as a place where the numbers reported for missionaries in the preceding category was 5% or more higher. So, if 56% of those in the field for 10-19 years report something as a support, but only 50% of those in the field for 20-29 years do so, this marks a dip.

need less help. Although there is obviously a wide degree of variance based on the

person, five years may also be a point at which it is harder for people to continue to

keep up relationships at home. Additionally, by the time missionaries have been in the

field for 5 years, they are almost guaranteed to have faced significant adversity. So,

they have lost the supports given to newbies, they have fewer supportive relationships

at home, and they've had difficult experiences. In many cases they have responded by

seeking and receiving help in crisis situations, counseling, and debriefing.

Finally, there is a distinct downturn in descriptions of Interpersonal Interactions

that are supports for those who serve/have served in the field for thirty or more years.

Of all groups, they show the greatest imbalance in these terms (see chart below). It is

impossible to say whether they were, in fact, receiving fewer of these helps than their

peers who had been in the field for shorter periods, or if they simply didn't report it.

Either way, being at the top of the chart for reporting only two of these types of

Interpersonal Interactions and being at the bottom of the chart for reporting 9 out of 21

is notable.

	Number of themes this group is least likely to cite	Number of themes this group is most likely to cite
4 or fewer years in field	4	9
5-9 years in field	8	5
10-19 years in field	1	2
20-29 years in field	1	5
30 or more years in field	9	2

Gender

Women were more likely to describe every type of helpful Interpersonal Interaction in the companioning, special circumstances, and help from home areas. Although women were more likely to say they received coaching overall, men were more likely to describe three out of six of the types of coaching: spiritual coaching, mentoring, and coaching in leadership or other job-related areas. From anecdotal stories and from the fact that mentoring often involves a close relationship with a leader, I wonder if this is related to the tendency to have men in positions of leadership, building relationships with and preparing other men for leadership.

Age

Age did seem to have some effect on missionaries' use of different Interpersonal Interaction themes. Apart from the Boomer generation, which was lower by approximately 9%, all other generations were equally likely to describe coaching from experienced missionaries as part of their resilience journey. This indicates a fairly uniform 1/3 chance that missionaries are getting some coaching from experienced missionaries.

There was one direct correlation between age and an Interpersonal Interaction theme (coaching from the organization). On the other hand, there were direct negative correlations between age and four themes and general trends downward with an additional two.[473] In particular, members of the Silent generation were unlikely to say

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[473] Mutuality, counseling, financial support, informal support and debriefing, visits from passport country, respectively.

they had benefitted from helps from home, debriefing or counseling, two types of

coaching, and four out of ten of the companioning interactions. In the chart below, this

trend is evident as well: The oldest missionaries tended to mention fewer themes of

Interpersonal Interactive support in their resilience journey, while the youngest

missionaries tended to mention more. Presumably, there is a tie between the age of

missionaries and the length of time they are in the field, connecting the dip for people

serving thirty or more years to the Silent and (early) Boomer generations.

	Number of themes this group is most likely to cite	Number of themes this group is least likely to cite
Silent	6	10
Boomer	4	6
Gen X	4	4
Millennials	10	2

Because this difference is so pronounced, it would be worth further investigating—are

older missionaries receiving less support from Interpersonal Interactions? Do they

remember the support they did receive differently? Do they not report it because it is

not at the forefront for them?

CD-RISC Score Groups

There are also clear ties between CD-RISC and descriptions of helpful

Interpersonal Interactions as a part of missionaries' resilience journey. Only one theme

(general coaching) has a general trend downward.[474] There is a direct correlation between CD-RISC score group and 5 themes,[475] and an additional 5 themes are more likely to be used by those missionaries who scored in the Highest, High, and Average score groups than those in the Low or Lowest score groups.[476]

The final evidence of this connection is found in the chart below, comparing the CD-Risc score groups in terms of their likelihood to use different themes. As you can see, those in the Highest score group were most likely to describe many of these supports to their resilience, while those in the Lowest score group were most likely to use only one theme and least likely to use 16 out of 21 Interpersonal Interaction themes. Additionally, of those 16 themes least likely to be used by missionaries who scored in the Lowest group, 15 of them were low outliers (they were 10% or more lower than the next highest group).

	Number of themes this group is most likely to cite	Number of themes this group is least likely to cite
Highest (+2 SD)	8	2
High (+1 SD)	5	0
Average	2	2
Low (-1 SD)	7	2
Lowest (-2 SD)	1	16

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[474] Low and Lowest are more likely to use this theme than High, Highest, or Average.

[475] Listening, Mentoring, Coaching in leadership and other work skills, help in a crisis, and financial support.

[476] Long term support, encouragement, confirmation of calling, mutual support, and living life together.

There is one interesting anomaly seen in this chart—those in the Low score group are almost as likely to be at the top of the list as those in the Highest score group.[477] My suspicion is that this is because organizations really do try to help those they perceive as being in trouble—when someone is struggling, they may be offered extra coaching, in particular. Additionally, missionaries who are struggling will sometimes be encouraged to avail themselves of counseling or debriefing. Those in the Low category were the least likely to report feeling like they had no support or inadequate support from others.[478] It seems logical that those who score in the Low category but not in the Lowest may be those who have experienced extremely difficult circumstances, but who have taken advantage of many of the helps offered to them.

Counter-Narratives of Interpersonal Interaction

Lest we paint an unreasonably rosy picture, in the area of interpersonal interaction there are also some negative, or counter-narrative, themes. In these stories, missionaries described people who were not supportive or not helpful in increasing their resilience, or they made more general negative comments about not receiving adequate support in the field from others. In this section I will discuss the top

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[477] Those in the Low score group are most likely to mention: Coaching in general, Coaching from an Experienced Missionary, Coaching from their organization, debriefing, counseling, and non-judgmental acceptance.

[478] Reported No/Inadequate Support: Highest (n=2, 13.33%), High (n=6, 14.29%), Average (n=32, 18.84%), Low (n=1, 6.67%), Lowest (n=2, 33.33%)

Interpersonal Interaction counter-narrative themes, all of which had a reporting rate of more than 12.95%.[479]

First of all, missionaries do report receiving inadequate support from others through Interpersonal Interactions (n=43, 17.41%). In these stories, missionaries mentioned receiving no support, minimal support, or even being harmed by relationships with others in ways that lessened support. Although some of these stories included self-contradicting accounts of support from someone or a positive viewpoint that has come out of the situation, that doesn't change the fact that this is an important emotional reality for these missionaries:

> *On field, we have rarely had other people to turn to, as we came out as the first missionaries to this country from our mission…I think that because we had little on-field support, I really want to give that kind of encouragement and support to others who God is bringing out to work with us, so that they can use our experience to be at a higher starting point themselves, not having to learn everything the hard way and from scratch!*[480]

Stories of interpersonal conflict constituted the most prevalent counter-narrative theme (n=103, 41.70%). Missionaries told many stories of conflict or relationship difficulties that impacted their sense of resilience. The relationships described could be with any significant person(s) in the missionary's life, and the conflicts could be positively resolved, negatively resolved, or continue in a way that is unresolved/

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[479] There were two main counter-narrative themes and nine sub-themes that over 5% of missionaries used in their stories.
Themes between 5% and 12.95%:
Interpersonal Conflict: Ongoing/Unresolved (n=24, 9.72%)
IC: With Local Colleagues/Workers/Church (n=24, 9.72%)
I have less trust in others than I used to (n=17, 6.88%)
IC: resolution unclear (n=14, 5.67%)
IC: resolved negatively (n=13, 5.26%)

[480] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for more than 30 years. (Q219)

unresolvable. The stories could also be very specific, telling a story of a particular

situation with a particular person, or they could be more general. This is the area

where the old trope that "missionaries' biggest stressor is other missionaries" may

prove to be true:

> *Hardships and persecution are NOT, in my view, the adversities that really take down missionaries, but the adversities from within the Body as illustrated in my last comments. The Biblical parallel was when Paul was turning things over to Timothy and told him, "I know when I am gone that wolves will come from within..." This is the adversity for which most missionaries are ill prepared. That adversity may not really be from opposition but very often from simple misunderstandings across interpersonal relations too.*[481]

There are distinct themes in terms of **who** this interpersonal conflict is with.

Often missionaries described experiences of conflict in their most intimate

relationships: family, close friends, or immediate team members (n=56, 22.67%).

Again, these stories could be general or specific, resolved or unresolved. The

distinction is that to express this sub-theme, the missionary must have described a

relationship that is close enough to them that one would generally expect it to be

supportive, but in the case of this missionary it not only wasn't supportive to resilience

but detracted from it. Sometimes conflict comes from the places we would most

expect support: *"Most of the adversity that I've faced in my missionary experience has

been in my marriage."*[482]

Additionally, a significant number of missionaries experienced interpersonal

conflict with a person or people from their sending organization (n=32, 12.96%). This

could be conflict with the home office back in the passport country or with an

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[481] North American serving in Eastern Africa for more than 30 years. (Q181)

[482] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 9 years. (Q114)

immediate boss in the field. (Conflict with the organization is distinguished from personal conflict by taking place in relationships of less intimacy.) Often, the stories told include a power-differential, where the person or people from the organization used their authority in a way that the missionary perceived as unhelpful, unsupportive, or even harmful. For example: *"I was told by my ministry boss, if I said no to a job request, I wasn't a team player. I was told that burnout wasn't real and that the people suffering on the team were just being emotional, disruptive, or complainers. When I asked for help I was refused, or the need was invalidated."*[483]

The idea that over 40% of missionaries report significant interpersonal conflict is sobering; however, those of us who care about missionary resilience should not despair! I say this because a significant number of these conflicts are actually resolved in positive ways. **This means that conflict can be constructive, not just destructive.**

What makes conflict constructive is "the extent to which conflict behavior produces better outcomes for the organizational dyad by resolving the conflict, improving the relationship between the parties, or both."[484] Often missionaries were able to resolve conflict positively—in a way that preserved (or even deepened) the relationship, taught a lesson, allowed for new insight, benefitted their work, or in some other way that they themselves perceived as positive (n=53, 21.46%; 51.46% of all conflict). Additionally, sometimes missionaries were able to resolve conflicts by setting or renewing boundaries in relationships: The missionary was in conflict, they

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[483] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q77)

[484] Evert van de Vliert, et al, "Constructive Conflict at Work," *Journal of Organizational Behavior.* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Jul., 1999), 476.

responded by setting a new boundary, and out of that there was a positive change that either took care of the conflict or removed its effect from the missionary (n=38, 15.38%; 36.89% of all conflict).[485]

I find a lot of hope in the idea that of those missionaries describing conflict, 64.08%[486] actually talked about constructive conflict, which does not make all conflict easy or good. It does mean that interpersonal conflict can be part of the Resilience Cycle for missionaries, leading to greater resilience:

> *I've had to learn that it is okay to say no…As I moved into a leadership role I had to put some boundaries in place and say No I'm not going to be dragged into work discussions in the evenings or on the weekends. I needed to let my team mates know the boundaries that I had put in place.[487]*

> *I have often challenged the status quo …(This was not as easy as I thought it would be but I learned much during the year even when things came crashing down - r'ships w/ the family went sour, I got regularly cat-called ...) God used it all…. All of this grew me into a leader - not only in my agency but also in other spheres as well. I learned much during these times, often the hard way. But I grew. Some of the fine gold was being etched into those cracks.[488]*

> *Also relationships have been so difficult. What the books say are true. Most of the reasons people leave the mission field is because of other missionaries. I have again been broken here as well. I have had to go and ask forgiveness many times. I have had to withstand misunderstanding. But Jesus makes a way. I have*

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[485] For more information on constructive conflict, see Allan Rohlfs, "Beyond Anger and Blame: How to Achieve Constructive Conflict," *Christian Century*, November 12, 2012, 22-25.

Rohlfs brings in ideas from Non-violent Communication, which is a way of interacting with others in order to "regard the person as other than an enemy," and have "the freedom to respond with care." (Rohlfs, "Constructive Conflict," 22.)

Learn more about Nonviolent Communication as a tool for dealing with conflict at https://www.cnvc.org/about.

[486] There are 66 missionaries who mention either resolving conflict positively (n=53) or resolving it with new boundaries (n=38) or both (n=25).

[487] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q7)

[488] North American serving in South Asia for more than 30 years. (Q195)

learned that not all conflict is bad but it reveals an area where God desires to work.[489]

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[489] North American serving in South America for 27 years. (Q178)

Discussion

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have described Who missionaries say helped in their resilience journeys and How those others were helpful. Both quotes from missionaries and references for these helpful "Whos" and "Hows" have been given. I included a demographic analysis for Who is helpful that found that all missionaries, regardless of age, CD-RISC score, or length of service, benefit from supportive peers and safe leaders. The size of the organization with which missionaries serve seems to be loosely connected (inversely) to the support they receive/report from their family in the passport country. Over time, missionaries tend to rely less on support from home and more on spouses and others in the field. And those missionaries who score lowest on the CD-RISC tend to report fewer people as supportive to their resilience journey.

In the demographic analysis for what others do to be helpful to missionaries, I found that all missionaries, regardless of age, CD-RISC score, or length of service, benefit from being listened to and offered practical support. There is a drop in reports of supportive Interpersonal Interactions at both the 5-9 year mark and the 30 or more year mark in length of service, connected to a drop for the Silent generation. Women are more likely than men to report almost all types of external social support, with the exceptions being possibly tied to leadership and training of men. Finally, CD-RISC scores are associated with rates of reporting helpful Interpersonal Interactions—the increase in reporting with the increase in score is notable for many themes, and there is

a clear pattern of those scoring in the Lowest group lacking (or at least not reporting) supports.

This chapter ended with a discussion of the most significant counter-narratives I see in these missionaries' stories of their Interpersonal Interactions along the resilience journey. A significant number of missionaries do not feel that they receive adequate support from others. Interpersonal conflict is a significant factor for many missionaries, one which may hinder their growth in resilience or may be a part of the Resilience Cycle, depending on whether it is constructive or destructive conflict.

Discussion of Findings

Missionaries grow in their resilience when they have coaches, colleagues, and friends (in their passport countries and in the field) who will listen to them with loving acceptance, pray for them, encourage them, and affirm their calling for the long haul. They also benefit from the capacity to engage with others through healthy boundaries and constructive, not destructive, conflict. In other words, Interpersonal Interactions— the ways that missionaries are supported by others—are vital to their resilience.

Supportive relationships do not happen by magic, however. The majority of Interpersonal Interactions missionaries benefit from are based in skills—skills that can be introduced, invited, encouraged, and grown. Additionally, many of these skills are not dependent on relationship with the "home office." This means that we who work in training and care of missionaries actually have a tertiary role in missionaries' lives. Because of this, I would suggest that there are four areas that mission-practitioners like

me need to engage with serious attention to be a part of helping, and not harming, missionary resilience.

The first is the area of training. In addition to foundations of theology and dealing with other cultures, training should include setting expectations and giving tools for dealing with life in community. Missionaries should be offered training in relationship skills, such as those in the Relationship Enhancement program[490] or Nonviolent Communication.[491] Such training should be genuinely aimed at setting missionaries up to care for each other in the field. This investment in the beginning of missionaries' careers should encourage a holistic culture of care within the entire organization.

Secondly, we need to keep an eye on missionaries in different ways as they enter different seasons of their lives. There are clearly natural rhythms here—those in the field for four or fewer years are getting lots of support. How are they doing once they hit the 5-9 year mark, in particular? Although they did not score lower on the CD-RISC, missionaries who had been in the field for 5-9 years were the most likely among the service lengths to report interpersonal conflict in general,[492] conflict in their team or

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[490] See extensive footnote in Chapter 5 citing Guerney Jr., Bernard G. *Relationship Enhancement: Skill-Training Programs for Therapy, Problem Prevention, and Enrichment.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: Jossey-Bass Behavioral Science Series. 1991.

[491] For more on Nonviolent Communication, visit https://www.cnvc.org/about

[492] Interpersonal Conflict reported by:

In field 4 or fewer years:	31.03%
In field 5-9 years:	**45.16%**
In field 10-19 years:	41.25%
In field 20-29 years:	43.48%
In field 30 or more years:	41.38%

family,[493] inadequate support,[494] and burnout.[495] My guess is missionaries in this season of their career would appreciate and benefit from greater interpersonal supports.

Thirdly, we need to consider our role in supporting missionary resilience. Missionaries who say that they have no support or inadequate support are less likely to say they have any number of types of supportive relationships: with other missionaries, with local colleagues and friends, with teammates, with their family in the passport country, with counselors, and with their spouses. For those who do not feel that they are receiving enough support, the most significant gaps relate to their organizations— from organizational member care and safe leaders. In terms of care, 16.6% of missionaries mention supportive relationships with the member care offered by their organization, but only 4.65% of those who receive inadequate support report this helpful relationship. Most notably, where 36.44% of missionaries report feeling supported by a safe leader, only 16.28% of those receiving inadequate support do so

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[493] IC in team/family reported by:

In field 4 or fewer years:	20.69%
In field 5-9 years:	**27.42%**
In field 10-19 years:	20%
In field 20-29 years:	19.57%
In field 30 or more years:	24.14%

[494] No/Inadequate Support reported by:

In field 4 or fewer years:	13.79%
In field 5-9 years:	**20.97%**
In field 10-19 years:	18.75%
In field 20-29 years:	10.87%
In field 30 or more years:	20.69%*

*Note that missionaries serving longest are essentially just as likely to say they have inadequate support.

[495] Burnout reported by:

In field 4 or fewer years:	17.24%
In field 5-9 years:	**19.35%**
In field 10-19 years:	7%
In field 20-29 years:	15.22%
In field 30 or more years:	13.75%

—this is a 20% difference! It seems to me that improving the support offered in just these two roles would go a long way to move the dial toward adequate support for these missionaries.

Finally, we need to BE safe leaders and good long-term listeners.[496] Fidelity to this ideal may mean investing in training ourselves in order to build the skills we need. It will likely mean reflecting on past actions and repenting where we have fallen short. It will certainly mean asking missionaries what they need and how we can support them in getting it and then acting on what they tell us.

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[496] For additional information on key facets of supportive leadership, see also "Supporting Today's Global Workers Toward Missional Resilience" by Geoff and Kristina Whiteman, in *EMQ* April-June 2022,Vol 58, Is 2.

CHAPTER 9:

A NEW FACTOR: GOD

I think the main change has been learning to depend on God's goodness and sovereignty in the face of threats and frustrations without and weakness within, and, out of the reserves of that calm trust, being more patient with other people and with circumstances. I notice that I am less resilient under stress when I am focused on my own strength rather than God's…[497]

We depended on God, throwing ourselves into his word and trusting him in prayer. … We have learned that God is faithful and good, loving and sovereign, through difficult times. He refines and grows his children through suffering, he does not spare us from difficulty.[498]

When I was in Missions School we had this saying, "I will not be shocked. I will be flexible. I will walk in Love." Whatever situation I am facing as a missionary, remembering those words helps me to not be overtaken by the situation, but to trust in and rely on the Lord through the situation and use what I am experiencing as a training experience rather than seeing it as a hopeless trial or difficult challenge. I can do all things through Christ! To me, being resilient in ministry comes from a healthy, growing relationship with The Father. When you know who God is and are discovering more about Him every day, then He is the one who makes you able to stand!… I'm starting to see myself in a different way, I'm seeing the things the Lord has graced me to do and the person he's called me to be. Since being here I know that I am capable of so much

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[497] Australian/New Zealander serving in Central America for 17 years. (Q79)

[498] Northern European serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q160)

more than I originally thought. I can do ANYTHING God calls me to do and go ANYWHERE. Any trial that comes up will only help me to become better.[499]

Introduction

I could not think of a better way to begin this chapter than to share some of the words missionaries used to talk about their relationships with God. For so many, who God is and what God is doing in their lives is the foundation upon which everything else is based. God is at the center of missionary resilience.

The framework of Narrative Inquiry includes three lenses with which a researcher views peoples' stories: Place, Interaction, and Temporality. You have already seen the ways I have expanded on Interaction in order to more comprehensively cover missionaries' stories. Simply expanding on that one lens was not enough, however: I discovered that it was impossible to understand missionaries' stories of resilience without looking at how they viewed God and their relationship with God.

Initially, I thought these narrative themes would fit in the (already huge) category of Interactions. I realized, however, that the narrative themes that missionaries use to link their relationship with God to their resilience journey included ideas that fit under Interaction, Temporality, and even Place. Additionally, even as I thought about putting the "God" themes into these other categories, I felt that what people had to say about God and their relationship with God went beyond the other themes in the categories in some ways. Because of this, I chose to create this new lens—a new category of Narrative Inquiry—for these themes.

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[499] North American serving in Northern Europe for 4 years. (Q190) Lightly edited for clarity.

In this chapter, I will explore this new area of Narrative Inquiry by describing some of the God-related themes found in missionaries' stories.[500] I will give a demographic analysis of these themes. A brief description of the very few counter-narrative themes will follow.[501]   Finally, I will end with a discussion of "takeaways" for this chapter.

Themes: Missionaries' Experience of God[502]

Growth Through Trust and Dependence

For the vast majority of missionaries, their time in the field has resulted in a stronger relationship with God (n=220, 89.07%). The deepening of the connection is not in spite of, but through, and even because of, hardship and adversity. Sometimes this connection happens simply through choosing to accept what is difficult and turn to the Lord.[503] Sometimes it is based on seeing God as the only constant in a tumultuous

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[500] In a departure from most chapters, I will be including two themes that fell below 20%: God as Good, and a growing awareness of God's love for others.

[501] It is important to note that, although there were some negative counter-themes related to God or the relationship with God, none of these was present in more than 3.64% of stories. Furthermore, of the 16 positive narrative themes relating to God, only 5 did not break the 20% mark: all were used by at least 8% of missionaries. Additionally, two out of the five most commonly present narrative themes (*I have built a stronger relationship with God,* and *I trust God based on my experience*) fell into this category.

[502] The only themes related to God which fell below 8% were counternarrative motifs. No themes fell between 17.41% and 28.34%.

Themes related to God's character or a relationship with God between 8.10% and 10.12%:
I have encountered spiritual warfare: n=25, 10.12%
I have had a "power encounter": n=20, 8.1%
The goal of my work is to honor/glorify/worship God: n=20, 8.1%

[503] North American serving in Northern Africa for 3 years. (Q30)

situation.[504] Whatever has happened in a missionary's life, it has resulted in a deeper

connection that is palpably different for them:

> *My relationship with God has shifted away from "certainty" to "security"... and it's much more safe here. It isn't dependent on external dogma, but on internal processes and spirituality that sustains me. And it is sourced in Him. I am much more patient with people; much less judgmental and willing to acknowledge that each person is on a journey. I have more optimism with people, knowing there is a path to resilience that expresses deep spirituality and is authentic. I view myself with much more grace.[505]*

Many missionaries feel that building this stronger relationship with God has

resulted in a level of spiritual growth that has contributed to their resilience in ways that

are deeply meaningful (n=216, 87.45%). Over the course of time, these missionaries

have been changed as they have grown, even in how they see themselves: *"I feel more*

in a relationship of love to the Father (and Son and Holy Spirit) now than ever. I feel

much more how he is the centre of everything, and I keep choosing to put him

there….And in my view of myself I am healthier in my view of myself as God's

workmanship and with human limits."[506]

For many, this deeper relationship with God that is a result of their spiritual

growth leads them toward dependence on God (n=183, 74.09%). They know that to

get through adversity, or even just to grow, they must look to God to act. This leads to

lightness, joy, and even a sense of freedom in their work and life, as they see the

answer to their own limitations in their reliance on God:

> *I have learned to be more dependent on God, His Spirit at work in and through me, and not to look so much to my own abilities or inabilities…It is such a joy to*

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[504] Australian/New Zealander serving in Melanesia for 8 years. (Q33)

[505] North American serving in Melanesia for 18 years. (Q213)

[506] Northern European serving in Southern Europe for 6 years. (Q62)

be more at peace with God, myself and others regardless of life circumstances. I am learning to be content - whether I have much or little, whether I do lots or nothing for God specifically in the way I use to perceive ministry and life for God.[507]

The dependence they expressed is not naive or unfounded, however: These missionaries trust God primarily because their experiences give them reason to (n=217, 87.85%). In much the same way that they trust that the sun will rise tomorrow because it rose today and every day before, they see God's previous actions as evidence that God will continue to act—that God will provide for, protect, encourage, and heal them: *"To add to how my relationship with God has been affected- I think I'm just growing in trust of His faithfulness because of how He's kept me going, provided for me and for those around me, answered specific prayers, and changed some hearts along the way. I feel like I am gaining a history with Him, enjoying Him more in the journey."*[508]

A God Who Has Called Me to God's Mission of Love

For many, this sense of a deep trusting relationship with God began with feeling a clear calling—they know that God has called them to this work, and that is a source of strength (n=90, 36.44%). However, this calling is not a one-and-done thing—for many missionaries God's confirmation of calling through different events throughout their service is also a source of growth in resilience (n=134, 54.25%). God gives them

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[507] Southern African serving in Eastern Africa for over 30 years. (Q210)

[508] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 29 years. (Q145)

lightness, confirmation, joy, hope, and love throughout the journey by reminding them

what they have been called to and by whom.[509]

This calling is not to their own mission, but to God's mission in the world

(n=125, 50.61%). While some missionaries directly mention either "missio Dei" or

"God's Mission,"[510] others imply the concept by saying things like, *"I have grown into a*

greater dependence on God, realizing more that I am a part of what He is doing, not

primarily carrying out the plan of an organization."[511] Whether implicit or explicit, many

missionaries say that part of the reason they can rely on and trust in God is that this is

God's work in the first place. This approach gives greater freedom and confidence,

and the ability to accept themselves and their limitations; their responsibility is to do

only what they can do as part of a larger whole: *"My approach to ministry has changed*

in that I have become more convinced that it is not my ministry but that it is God's. It is

Missio Dei. I am privileged to participate in His mission."[512]

Sometimes a part of the calling to God's mission in the world is an awareness of

how much God loves others (n=43, 17.41%). When they see themselves as called to

participate in God's mission, this love for others is something that they are called to as

well: *"I am often reminded that Jesus met people where they were and how they were*

and loved them. I am continually challenged to follow that model in life and in

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[509] Australian/New Zealander serving in South America for 19 years. (Q149)
North American serving in Southeastern Asia for 7 years. (Q24)

[510] See, for example:
Western European serving in Western Europe for more than 30 years.(Q9)
North American serving in Northern Africa for 3 years. (Q30)
North American serving in Central Asia for 13 years. (Q127)

[511] North American serving in Southeastern Asia for over 30 years. (Q15)

[512] Western European serving in Western Europe for more than 30 years. (Q9)

ministry."[513] When they come to the view that "*the heartbeat of God is 'people. people. people.',*"[514] this becomes their heartbeat as well.

Ultimately, for many missionaries that sense of calling, of being invited to join God's mission in the world, gives their work greater meaning and purpose (n=196, 79.35%).[515] In times when they feel uncertain, or when they are aware that they are "in process," the fact that a trustworthy God has called them can give new significance to the hard things. God's calling becomes part of their resilience story:

> *I struggle with my view of myself because I know I don't quite see myself as God sees me yet.… As I have grown more resilient my life has certainly not become "easier." In fact, we have gone through very hard things in the last couple of years on the field. Again, I'm learning to trust that despite the difficulties He is working in me. When my husband and I first went to the field we would have described ourselves as resilient and probably others looking on would have described us as such. Instead we realized through burnout and depression that we weren't quite as amazing as we thought! God would not have been able to develop this resilience in us if we weren't aware of our brokenness and utter need of Him.*[516]

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[513] North American serving in Southern Africa for 7 years. (Q150)

[514] North American serving in Northern Europe for 4 years. (Q190)

[515] The idea of finding meaning and purpose through mission/calling is in line with the Headington Institute's Four Factors of resilience for first responders. See https://www.headington-institute.org/resource/what-we-know-about-responder-resilience/

[516] North American serving in Middle Africa for 19 years. (Q56)

A God Who is Faithful, Strong, and Good

Many missionaries experience God's character and nature in ways that change everything; there is a combination of traits that define who God is and therefore why God is trustworthy and worth following. First of all, these missionaries see God as absolutely faithful (n=199, 80.57%). God can be depended on to come through for missionaries—to lead, strengthen, and heal them in the midst of their pain: *"In what ways did earlier adversity help you prepare for later adversity? It gave me hope that I knew I would get through this and that God is faithful."*[517]

Secondly, missionaries saw God as sovereign (n=86, 34.82%)[518]—God's ultimate power comforted them when they were overwhelmed and brought meaning to situations where they otherwise might not see it. Often such stories involved acknowledging that God is in control of everything,[519] which led the missionary to believe that, *"ultimately any of the spiritual fruit that we desire to see must come from the Lord and through the Spirit's power."*[520] Again, this realization allowed missionaries

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[517] Australian/New Zealander serving in Southeastern Asia for 9 years. (Q83)

[518] I am aware that the idea of "sovereignty" carries a lot of theological heft and may mean different things to different people. The views outlined in this paragraph are genuinely present in the stories of missionaries, but that does not make all missionaries a monolith. Some, like this North American serving in South America for 27 years (Q75), take a less Calvinistic approach to sovereignty:
> *"I choose to believe God is sovereign, but I do not understand his sovereigness. I cannot stand simple answers to difficult questions. I am put off by the response of so many in difficult times, "God is in control." While I choose to believe that God is ultimately in control of human history, I cannot accept that everything that happens in the world is because God willed it to happen."*

[519] Northern European serving in Southeastern Asia for 13 years. (Q13)
North American serving in multiple regions for 12 years. (Q37)
West African serving in Western Africa for 9 years. (Q44)
North American serving in Middle Africa for 19 years. (Q56)

[520] North American serving in Central Asia for 8 years. (Q61)

to feel less pressure, more room to say that God is able where they are not. Their

weaknesses were okay:

> *Knowing at the core of my being that ultimately, the task was God's responsibility and not mine was a critical piece in the puzzle of developing resilience. Related to that, both a growing sense of the fact of His sovereignty in all things, and an increasing surrender to His lordship and sovereignty in my life have led to and/or been the result of growing resilience in me.*[521]

This is not to say that seeing God's sovereignty is a blanket "pass" for all that is

hard, or that it doesn't require choice on the part of the missionary: *"I don't always get*

it right, but if I am staying connected to him and listening to the best of my ability to the

Spirit within me, then I know he is in control and no matter what happens, he is Good.

So, I trust him - even if I have to grit my teeth, I repeat to myself that he is Good and I

fully trust him until it becomes true once again."[522] The goodness of God (n=36,

14.57%) is an important balance to God's sovereignty—it is safe to trust in this

powerful God because God is Good.

A God Who Changes Me

Another balance to the understanding of God as sovereign is the missionary's

awareness of God's love for them (n=105, 42.51%). They know with certitude that

God's power is **for** them: *"I trust that I have a loving Father that is in control, and I am*

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[521] North American serving in Eastern Europe for 26 years. (Q187)

[522] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 29 years. (Q94)

secure in who I am as His child."[523] Knowing that God loves them also allows them to

see themselves in light of that love, which builds their resilience:

> *My view of myself is that I am a person created lovingly by God in His image. When I was younger I discovered my security in knowing that God created me, accepts me and loves me. While I'm aware of my faults and areas I could do better, I also don't try to be someone that I'm not. Or try to become who other people think I should be. I think this knowledge and attitude is a large part of my personal resilience!*[524]

God's unchanging and unshakeable love has life-changing results for

missionaries. Many have been transformed (n=70, 28.34%), renewed, and changed by

God in the midst of, not in spite of, adversity. Even as God is at work through them to

share God's love with others, God is at work in them through God's love for them:

> *It might sound strange but I would say my life has become more human – human in the way God intended it. I am more alive in and through Christ, accepting my weakness and his strength in me and therefore more human and less religiously self-centred and acting independent from God, thinking that I do know what he likes to do. So on the journey to become more resilient — more like Jesus — false self-images, self-imposed or being pushed into ones, have been torn off one layer after another.*[525]

Ultimately, as missionaries are transformed by God's love, they come not only to

trust a faithful, dependable, sovereign, good God, but to be changed in their very being

—they develop an identity that is in Christ, as God's beloved, one of his dear children

reaching out to share him with others who are dear to God (n=139, 56.28%). Finding

their identity in Christ may be expressed as an ongoing process[526] or as the foundation

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[523] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 9 years. (Q91)

[524] Australian/New Zealander serving in Eastern Africa for 9 years. (Q192)

[525] Western European serving in Eastern Asia for 14 years. (Q41)

[526] North American serving in Central America for 6 years. (Q4)
North American serving in South America for 19 years. (Q31)

of a missionary's work in the field.[527] Either way, it allows the missionary to release the pressure to seek "position, possession, or accomplishment,"[528] or find value in "my address, or my title, or meeting goals/outcomes."[529] Knowing that the core of who they are is clothed in Christ allows them to be "free to go out and love God and love others,"[530] confidently saying, "I am loved no matter what."[531] These missionaries grow in their resilience as they center themselves in the identity that God has given them:

> *No one on earth should own such a part of our lives that we begin to lose our God-created Identity. This belongs to God alone for service to Him and those HE directs us to. With a better view of who I am and the identity He has given me I am finding a joy hitherto unknown to me as I have learned that I give myself to Him and He gives me to serve others.*[532]

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[527] North American serving in Western Asia for 20 years. (Q155)

[528] South Asian serving in Australia/New Zealand for 22 years. (Q47)

[529] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q77)
See also North American serving in Western Africa for 28 years. (Q165)

[530] North American serving in Eastern Asia for 9 years. (Q91)

[531] North American serving in Central America for 24 years. (Q144)
See also North American serving in Southern Africa for 7 years.(Q150)
North American serving in Eastern Asia for 13 years. (Q77)
North American serving in Eastern Asia for 11 years. (Q26)

[532] Australian/New Zealander serving in Northern Europe for 6 years. Lightly edited for clarity. (Q137)

Demographic Analysis: Themes Related to God

Gender

There is a striking trend when it comes to gender and use of themes related to God: women used almost every theme more than men did. Men and women were almost equally likely to describe receiving a Clear Calling to the field (women are more likely by only .36%). Only one theme (God is Sovereign) was more likely to be used by men than by women, and that one is only by a margin of 2%. Some themes of calling have less prominent differences in use, but all themes related to growth through dependence and all themes related to transformation were used more frequently by women by 10% or more.

	Number of themes used ≤2% more frequently	Number of themes used 3-5% more frequently	Number of themes used 6-9% more frequently	Number of themes used ≥10% more frequently	total
W^M: Women used theme more than Men did	3	1	1	9	14
M^W: Men used theme more than Women did	1	0	0	0	1

One of two things can be assumed from this trend: Either women are much more likely to be supported by their relationship with God, or they are much more likely to describe being supported by their relationship with God.   When I consider that men are less likely to use many of the themes in this study, but that they do not score differently on the CD-RISC, I suspect that it is the latter. However, this would be an

area to consider for sending organizations—perhaps some men would benefit from some additional support in this area. Because the stories we tell ourselves are so crucial, certainly men would benefit from thinking and sharing more about the support they receive from God.

Length of Service

There are two interesting patterns when we consider the number of years missionaries have worked/are working in the field and their use of themes related to God.   First of all, 9 out of 15 of these themes show either a direct correlation to experience[533] or a general trend upward with experience.[534] In most cases, the longer a missionary is in the field, the more likely they are to describe growth in resilience as connected to their relationship with God.

This trend seems particularly true of those who are early in their career. Missionaries who had been in the field for four or fewer years were most likely to use only the theme of God's Goodness. They were in the middle for the themes of Transformation and God's Faithfulness, and they were second from the bottom in reporting a Clear Calling. All other themes (11 out of 15) were least likely to be used by missionaries who had served for four or fewer years (see chart below).   This seems to

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[533] 1. I have a Stronger Relationship with God
   2. Missio Dei

[534] 1. Spiritual Growth
   2. Dependence
   3. Trust Based on Experience
   4. Clear Calling (narrow range for the first 29 years, then 23% spike at 30+)
   5. Confirmation of Calling
   6. God is Faithful
   7. Finding Meaning and Purpose through Calling

me to be evidence of resilience, broken down into both protective and responsive

factors, being a skill in which missionaries grow. Missionaries who have been in the

field for the shortest time may not yet have had the opportunity to experience as many

Resilience Cycles—they may still be near the bottom of that spiral staircase. Over

time, it seems likely that if they continue to grow in resilience they would be more likely

both to have and to report God and their relationship with God as a major support in

their resilience journey.

Years in field	Number of Themes this group is most likely to use	Number of Themes this group is least likely to use
≤ 4	1	10
5-9	3	1
10-19	4	0
20-29	3	4
≥ 30	2	3

The second pattern related to years in the field is this: There is a distinct dip[535] in

descriptions of six out of fifteen themes for those missionaries serving for thirty or more

years.[536] Additionally, for the theme of Transformation, those who served for 20-29

years and those who served for thirty or more were tied 9% lower than those serving

10-19 years. It is possible that this, like previous theme-use deficits at thirty or more

years, relates back to cultural values that demand that members of older generations

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[535] Again, a dip is defined as a difference ≥ 5% between the preceding group and this group.

[536] Themes with a dip at 30+ years:
Spiritual Growth: -9.44%
Trust Based on Experience: -11.62%
God is Faithful: -15.44%
God is Good: -4.88%
Awareness of God's Love for Me: -6.82%
Identity in Christ: -8.24%

do not express needs or the meeting of those needs.[537] However, it is also possible

that at the end of a long career something is happening for missionaries which leads

them away from experiencing or expressing a supportive relationship with God.

Age

I found three interesting patterns related to the generation of the missionaries

sharing these stories. The first two had to do primarily with the Silent generation.[538]

There was a direct correlation, with 100% of Silent generation respondents using these

themes, between age and describing a Stronger Relationship with God, Dependence

on God, and a Clear Calling from God. With 5 out of 6 (83.33%) of the Silent

generation using the motif of God's Confirmation of that Calling, there was a general

trend upward with age. Furthermore, in these four categories, the Silent generation

was considerably more likely to use these themes than the generation preceding them:

	Rate at which Silent Generation used theme:	Difference from Boomers:
Stronger Relationship with God	100%	+6.9%
Dependence on God	100%	+22.99%
Clear Calling from God	100%	+59.77%
God's Confirmation of Calling	83.33%	+17.81%

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[537] Of the 29 missionaries in this study who served for thirty or more years, 27 are either Silent Generation or Boomers.

[538] It is important to note the low number of Silent generation participants whenever one is looking at these statistics. However, I believe the parallels between the years-in-field results and the results according to age lend greater credibility to these findings.

However, the second pattern had to do with the much lower rates of using other themes by the Silent generation: For 8 out of the remaining 11 themes, the Silent generation showed significant dips in usage:

	Rate at which Silent Generation used theme:	Difference from Boomers:
Meaning and Purpose through Calling	66.67%	-16.09%
Spiritual Growth	83.33%	-5.18%
Awareness of God's Love for Me	16.67%	-23.56%
Awareness of God's Love for Others	0%	-19.54%
Identity in Christ*	50%	-15.31%
Missio Dei	33.33%	-28.74%
Transformation	0%	-29.89%
Trust God Based on Experience	83.33%	-8.62%

* For Identity in Christ, Silent and Boomers were tied, -15% below Gen X

It is clear, then, that for 12 out of 15 themes, the Silent Generation is either much more likely or much less likely to use them—there is very little in between. Additionally, for three themes (God is Faithful, Transformation, Meaning and Purpose through Calling), the Silent generation is the only low outlier—with the other generations using these themes at very similar rates.[539] This further separates members of the Silent generation from other age groups.

The third pattern I see related to age is this: The middle generations are reporting more support from their relationship with God than either the youngest or

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[539] Meaning and Purpose through Calling: range of 5.97% for the other three generations.
God is Faithful: range of 2.41% for the other three generations.
Transformation: range of 1.32% for the other three generations.

oldest generations.   Both Boomer and Generation X missionaries have a higher

likelihood to describe helpful, supportive aspects of their relationship with God. The

Silent generation is split but is still more likely to be at the low end in terms of using a

theme. The difference is most striking for Millennial missionaries, who are most likely

to use only the theme that God is Good, and least likely to use 7 out of 15 other

themes.

	Most Likely to Use this many themes:	Least likely to use this many themes:
Silent Generation	4	6
Boomers	7	2
Generation X	5	1
Millenials	1	7

Number of Fields of Service

When looking at the number of fields a missionary serves in, there are direct

negative correlations with the themes of Awareness of God's Love for Others,

Awareness of God's Love for Me, Meaning and Purpose through Calling, and

Transformation. Additionally, missionaries who served in more than two fields were

most likely to use the most themes and the least likely to use the fewest themes, while

the opposite was true of those serving in two locations. Those serving in one field fell in

between.[540] Are those who serve in more than two fields experiencing more support

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[540] Upon seeing how this chart shook out, I tried to see if I could calculate a tie between number of fields and CD-RISC score group, but I don't know enough about running the numbers and so couldn't come to a conclusion about a possible connection. This would be an area worth further study and/or double-checking with a statistician.

from their relationship with God than those who serve in fewer fields? Are those who

serve in two fields experiencing less support from their relationship with God than

those who serve in one or more than two fields? This research shows that those who

serve in two fields report such experiences the least frequently, while those who serve

in more than two fields describe being supported by their relationship with God the

most frequently. This does seem to indicate a possible tie between the number of

fields in which one serves and one's experience of God in the resilience journey.

	Most Likely to Use this many themes:	In the middle for this many themes:	Least likely to use this many themes:
One field	8	7	4
Two fields	1	5	10
More than Two fields	10	7	1

CD-RISC Score Group

In the CD-RISC scores, those scoring higher on the CD-RISC were more likely to

describe a helpful relationship with God: There is a direct correlation for the themes of

Dependence, Meaning and Purpose through Calling, and Clear Calling. For the themes

of a Stronger Relationship, Spiritual Growth, Trust Based on Experience, and God is

Faithful, those in the Highest, High, and Average categories were the more likely users.

And those in the High and Highest score groups were more likely than those in the

Average, Low, or Lowest to describe God's Confirmation of their Calling and the Missio

Dei. No themes showed a direct negative correlation, and the only theme which

showed a general downward trend was Transformation.

The connection between describing the relationship with God as a support to resilience and CD-RISC score is clear when we consider likelihood of theme usage.[541] Twelve out of fifteen themes were most likely to be used by missionaries who scored in the Highest or High groups, while thirteen out of fifteen themes were least likely to be used by those who scored in the Low or Lowest groups:

	Most Likely to Use this many themes:	Least likely to use this many themes:
Highest	6	3
High	6	0
Average	1	0
Low	0	10
Lowest	2	3

Counter-Narratives Related to God

Although none of the themes either mentioning the relationship with God negatively or in a negative context were used by more than 3.64% of missionaries, I would be remiss if I did not mention them briefly. Some missionaries said that God was their only support in the field (n=9, 3.64%). This went beyond expressing dependence on God and went as far as saying that they perceived inadequate or no

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[541] Due to some ties in motif-usage, these numbers may be higher than 15.

support from others, making this a net negative and thus a counter-narrative theme.[542] A few missionaries felt cut off from God, or felt that God was distant from them in this season (n=7, 2.83%). The words "distant," "silent," or "cut off" might feature in these stories.[543]   There were also three missionaries (1.21%) who participated in the Written Interviews who no longer identify as Christian.

Finally, a few missionaries were not quite as definitive in their negative feelings about God or their relationship with God (n=5, 2.02%). Instead, they mentioned that they hoped that something positive or helpful was true, but they really were not operating from the certitude that many of their peers possessed. For example,

> *Currently I feel like I am in a stage of brokenness, waiting for God to put the pieces back together and praying that He chooses gold to fill in the cracks… When I read your questions, I feel like I should have positive and even noble responses to show how God has used these struggles to make me better and more effective.Unfortunately, that is not my reality. Hopefully it will be someday.*[544]

I do not want to discount the importance of these stories. Each of these missionaries is a precious child of God who has been wounded in the process of serving God. However, in some ways it's a surprise, given all that these missionaries have gone through, that more do not view God or their relationship with God negatively: Over half (n=130, 52.63%) report chronic stressors that are constant companions in the field. Nearly a quarter (n=60, 24.29%) have experienced significant

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[542] For example, *"While I cannot deny that individual people have supported me, it really seems to me that my support was God and not other specific people."*
North American serving in Eastern Asia for 5 years. (Q46)

[543] For example: *"Right now God seems pretty distant. I evidently am locking away some emotions, including relating to him."*
Northern European serving in multiple regions for 8 years. (Q11)

[544] North American serving in Eastern Africa for 6 years. (Q2)

trauma. More than a tenth (n=37, 14.98%) report reaching burnout. Some have experienced multiple traumas (n=10, 4.05%). And yet, the vast majority continue to report being transformed by a faithful God who loves them and others.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have explored this new area of Narrative Inquiry by describing some of the related themes found in missionaries' stories. I then gave a demographic analysis of these themes which showed connections between missionary descriptions of a supportive relationship with God and gender, time in the field, CD-RISC score, and number of fields. Additionally, this analysis showed that missionaries in the mid-range of service (especially 5-19 years) and middle two generations are more likely than those on either end of the spectrum to use these themes. I also described the counter-narrative themes, which, though statistically less significant, are nonetheless an important part of understanding these stories of growth in resilience.

I see three takeaways in these missionary stories of the importance of a transformative relationship with a faithful, dependable God who has called them to service. First of all, resilient missionaries' trust in God is not blind, naive, unwarranted, or automatic. Missionaries who are most likely to express this trust tend to be more experienced, older, and more resilient—in the same way that a person would earn trust by being dependable, faithful, and loving, God has earned missionaries' trust.

Secondly, the resilient missionary's experience is inseparable from their relationship with God, not only professionally, but also personally. This relationship anchors and makes possible their experience and shapes who they are as human beings. Resilient missionaries' spiritual growth toward a stronger relationship with a sovereign, faithful, loving, good God brings them to the field, sustains and strengthens

them, and ultimately transforms them at the core of their identity. These are not just

people working across cultures—they are Christ-followers engaged in theosis.

Finally, I would argue that the stories that missionaries tell themselves about

God must be tempered with a proper understanding of resilience. If I had a dollar for

every time I have (directly or indirectly) been told that the relationship missionaries have

with God ought to make them able to face any difficulty, I would be a rich woman. The

cycles of facing adversity, breaking, and bouncing back more able to face the next trial

are all part of the missionary's transformation in Christ. Their relationship with God is

so much more than an increase in grit. I can think of no better way to end this chapter

than with these quotes showing God's presence in their lives through all the

movements of resilience:

*I was real honest about how I felt. I didn't hold anything back to appear good to God!
In the midst of that, God began showing up for me in ways beyond what I'd imagined…
in the midst of a terrible time of ministry, I felt God's nearness and dearness so strongly.
It still brings me tears thinking of how quick God was to show up in my life throughout
that year. I felt God's goodness to me as Father God!…Jesus never rushed me. He
didn't shame me. Never made me feel like I needed to just get a move on. I think
experiencing God's presence in my life during those important healing moments has
given me this assurance of God's goodness and gentle (& fierce!) care in a real, tangible
way.*
—Eastern Asian serving in Southeastern Asia for 8 years. (Q217)

*The more I became resilient, the more life started to have more order…Life also
became more peaceful and full of blessings. Even though I do not know what may
come next, life is fuller and more hopeful. In time, you learn to respect God and all His
grand plans for you, and when you think about the past, you see God's handprint
everywhere and this makes you enjoy the moment right now, since you know your life
works according to the plan. And life does not feel like being caged in a zoo but
running on an open field; even if it may be full of many dangers, it is also full with all
kinds of blessings, and you feel the presence of the Lord and His watchful eyes on you.*
—Western Asian serving in Western Asia for 18 years. (Q209)

God and I are like old friends on a porch, rocking back and forth. He knows me, and he sits beside me in gentleness, we can talk about all we've done together, there is a comfort. He is good to me. My approach to ministry has changed in that I'm less hurried. I'm not rushing, I don't feel responsible. I also know no matter what I do, God will make it work for better. He will overcome any brokenness in any person I serve: he's done it for me, he will do it for them. I just show up and be faithful and he will work it out.
—North American serving in Western Asia for 9 years. (Q212)

CHAPTER 10:

CONCLUSION

Summary

*"**We are all storytellers, and we are the stories we tell.**"*[545]
—Dan McAdams, *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*

How do missionaries express their experience of the journey toward greater resilience? *If we are the stories we tell, who are these resilient missionaries?* This dissertation has been an attempt to answer this question.

In Chapter One, I described the need to get away from the "Missionary Hero" mindset and instead turn toward missionary resilience. I don't just want to know how to avoid attrition and "keep our numbers up." I want to know how those who cross cultures for the sake of the gospel can thrive, in or out of the field. I want to know how missionaries can bounce back from adversity. I want to know how God takes

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[545] McAdams, et al., *Identity and Story*, 3.

brokenness and makes beauty. I want to listen to, learn from, and amplify missionary

stories of growing in resilience.

In Chapter Two, I examined the work that has come before this study: What do

we already know about missionary resilience? In the process, I demonstrated that,

although literature from the field of psychology, literature pertaining to parallel

populations, literature on missionary care, and the scant research on missionary

resilience all contribute toward our understanding of this topic, there is still a gap in our

knowledge. There is a space that can and should be filled with the voices of the

missionaries who offered their Written Interviews to the Resilient Missionary Study.

In Chapter Three, I explained what I have done with these stories and why.

Having received them as a secondary data set from the original project created by

Geoff Whiteman, I have used the lenses of Narrative Inquiry—and created some

additional lenses of my own—to seek to understand the answers to these three sets of

questions. Acknowledging my own limitations and the limitations of my data and

methodology, I have also set forth my efforts to do these stories justice as I seek to

understand them.

In Chapter Four, the first of my content chapters, I described the Temporality

themes that missionaries used frequently–the ways they talk about the interplay of

past/present/future and change over time. Missionaries cited both protective and

responsive facets of resilience. They utilized redemption sequences as they described

their Resilience Cycles: the ways they have received adversity and grown through and

from it toward greater resilience, even when that adversity breaks them. Missionaries

perceived themselves as changing over time, building on past adversity and growing

even now. This positive journey has increased their desire to help others; this passing

on of lessons and of hope brings meaning to pain. Although these positive results are

not true for all missionaries, and some exhibit contamination sequences rather than

redemption sequences, the majority of these missionaries expressed that they were in

the process of growing in resilience. For them, the balance of lament and joy meant

that the pain of the past holds meaning in the present and hope for the future.

 In Chapter Five, I examined the ways that missionaries talk about Place (the

physical location and the location-bound cultural milieu) in the resilience journey.

Missionaries face Place-based adversity. The challenges they face may differ in some

ways, but there is a simplicity in the complexity: Many missionaries use motifs of

language/culture acquisition difficulty. Many face physical, mental, and relational health

issues. And many suffer from environmental strains—"lions, gorillas, and snakes"—

that make life more hazardous or difficult. But missionaries also experience Place-

based strength; the more they understand their context, the more fully they can

minister there. Their difficult experiences can be a stepping stone to greater resilience,

rather than the end of the story.

 In Chapter Six, I showed how missionaries talk about their Intrapersonal

Interactions—how they exhibit attitudes, attributes, and actions that build resilience.

Missionaries' stories show that the life of resilience is a life of acceptance: They accept

themselves, in their strengths and limitations. They accept reality, what is and is not

their responsibility. And they accept a helpful theology, that all things are under God's

care and that God's strength is made perfect in their weakness.

This chapter also featured a significant counter-narrative: Some missionaries do not experience enough intrapersonal support. Some are currently struggling. Some say they are not resilient. And some missionaries do not describe resilience or growth in resilience in their stories.

For most missionaries, though, building a life of acceptance contributes to successfully navigating life's tensions. Paying attention to their strengths and weaknesses and meeting their own needs through practical acts is the way they find freedom and grace. Receiving the very things that are difficult enables them to also receive the "gold that fills the cracks."

In Chapter Seven, I outlined what I have termed Transitional Interactions. These are circumstances in which an internal change, lesson, or realization becomes external as it changes a missionary's relationships with others. Greater understanding of themselves often becomes greater understanding of others. Greater grace with and for themselves often becomes greater grace for others: greater love, authenticity, empathy, encouragement, or forgiveness. These Transitional Interactions showed up time and time again; the inward-moving-to-outward transition is clear in these stories. These Transitional Interactions also show the importance of "looking over other peoples' shoulders" to really understand their perspective—the life of resilience is also a life of empathy for self and for others.

In Chapter Eight, I recounted the duality seen in these missionaries' Interpersonal Interactions: Other people may be their greatest stressors, but they are certainly missionaries' greatest supports. In response to the specific way the original questions were worded, missionaries described both Who was helpful and How they

were a part of the move toward greater resilience. There were people located in the field and/or at "home" who were supports. Sometimes they helped from a distance, and sometimes they helped in special circumstances. Sometimes they mentored missionaries, helping them to be or do better than they could have on their own. And sometimes they walked alongside missionaries in their real lives as companions for the journey. Whatever the relationship type, missionaries said they thrive when they have long-term relationships with safe people in different roles who will pray for them, listen to them well, and accept and encourage them.

This chapter featured two of the most prominent counter-narratives found in this study. The first was a lack of support or inadequate support. The second, the most frequent counter-narrative found in these missionaries' stories, is the theme of interpersonal conflict, particularly with those in close relationships and with the sending organization. Although this second counter-narrative theme taps into the "conventional wisdom" that missionaries' biggest problem is other missionaries, what we see in these stories is that this doesn't have to be the case. The conflict described by many missionaries was not destructive conflict. There is hope that missionaries can come through clashes and disagreements having built better relationships with others than they could have without the "iron sharpening iron" of constructive conflict.

In Chapter Nine, my final content chapter, I set out the final expansion of Narrative Inquiry for this dissertation, showing the ways that missionaries talk about God and their relationship with God as a part of their resilience journey. God is at the heart of missionary stories of resilience. The vast majority of missionaries connect growth in resilience to their spiritual growth and a deeper relationship of trust in and

dependence on a faithful, strong, good God. God's calling to participate in God's

mission of Love is fundamental to missionary resilience, as is God's transformation of

the missionary. Missionaries say that the very core of their being—their identity as

God's Beloved—is both a source and a result of the Resilience Cycle in their lives.

Here, too, not every missionary has a positive story. Some saw God as their

only support, evoking pain due to a lack of support from others. Some were

experiencing a cut-off—or at least distance—in their relationship with God. And some

experienced only uncertainty that God was for them and moving on their behalf to

redeem their pain.

For those whose relationship with God was fundamental to their resilience

journey, the trust they placed in God was not blind or unreasonable: God had earned

their trust by being trustworthy. For these missionaries, their relationship with God was

not only a professional byproduct, but also a personal necessity. Their stories and their

inner selves are centered on God, as God is the companion in their lament and the

source of their joy.[546]

Avenues for Future Research

There are several ways in which future analysis and extension of this research

could prove valuable. First of all, the depth and breadth of this data set mean that I

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[546] Throughout these chapters, there were notable findings in terms of demographics and how missionaries express their experience of the journey toward greater resilience. For example, women were more likely than men to use most narrative themes. However, my ability to distill other patterns is somewhat limited in this format/space. Therefore, I will address other patterns in future academic articles based on demographic groups such as gender, marital status, age, years in the field, field status, etc.

have not yet gleaned all I can from these stories. The demographic information, in particular, can be leveraged to gain deeper understanding—how do gender, marital status, age, field status, number of fields, etc., impact missionaries' stories? I personally am particularly interested in using future work to look at whether/how peoples' answers change according to whether they were on the field or off it when they completed the interview. A more detailed exploration of all these topics and more would be worthy of academic papers.

Secondly, because there are so few studies directly into missionary resilience, additional studies would be valuable. With the Research Institute at Valeo launching in the fall of 2022, there may be opportunities for collaboration. For instance, it would be valuable to investigate issues of interpersonal conflict, constructive conflict, and/or conflict competence through the framework of resilience.

Finally, The Resilient Missionary Study should be expanded both longitudinally and linguistically. One of the original reasons that Mr. Whiteman used the CD-RISC was its availability in a wide number of languages (over 90). According to the numbers in Gordon-Conwell's World Christian Database, adding Portuguese and Korean language versions would allow study of 50% of all missionaries. Adding Tagalog, Mandarin, Afrikaans, French, and German would move it up to 75%. And 90% of world-wide missionaries could participate in the Resilient Missionary Study if Italian, Hindi, Spanish, Dutch, and Polish were also added. This expansion seems plausible, given that I already know people who speak most of these languages and are interested in missionary resilience.

One question I have fielded on several occasions is, "Do you think that your results would look different after Covid?" Although I actually believe that more constants than changes might be found, this is one reason to turn the Resilient Missionary Study into a longitudinal study. There have been drastic changes (or at least amplifications) in the world over the last several years; I want to know what they mean for missionary resilience. Additionally, when this data was collected, the oldest members of Generation Z[547] had not yet graduated from college, and many Boomers who are now retired were still working; I want to know what shifts have happened as a result of this generational changeover.

Implications from Missionaries' Stories of Resilience

Having answered the question of how missionaries express their experience of growth in resilience and suggested some areas of future study, I will end by turning to the, "So, What?" questions I mentioned in my Introduction:

- How can understanding their stories contribute to the continued growth in resilience for missionaries?

- How can listening to missionaries' voices help those of us who train, lead, and care for them to contribute to their journey toward resilience?

Based on what I have learned from missionaries' stories of resilience, I identify five implications:

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[547] Pew Research defines Gen Z as those who were born from 1997 to 2012.

First of all, it is vital to recognize the beautiful fruit that the Resilience Cycle has borne in so many lives. These are stories of growth, grace, freedom, strength, authenticity, and hope. I wish that every missionary who participated in this interview could see the ways that they **really are growing more resilient**, that they could feel joy in the ways they are moving up that spiral staircase as they gain greater and greater levels of protective and responsive resilience.   If I could, I would tell all of them, "Guys, you're doing it!"

Secondly, missionaries are engaging holistically with the essence of human experience. Their wrestling with the meaning of adversity, the problem of evil, who God is and who we are in relation, how to be "human beings, not human doings," what it means to serve others and to love their neighbor as themselves—all these show that they are not floating on life's surface but plumbing its depths. This is why, as I look forward to doing the longitudinal work knowing that some particularities will perhaps have changed, I am not concerned that the years since this data was collected will tarnish the findings of this dissertation. Whatever the specifics, I believe that missionaries will still be growing more resilient through acceptance, supportive relationships, and transformation in and through Christ.

Third, resilience is both a grace and a skill. As a skill, it can be practiced, increased, and built up. Missionaries can be encouraged to strive for the attitudes, seek the attributes, and work out the actions of resilience. They can also be trained in the skills necessary for good relationships. Conflict competence, empathetic communication, and thoughtful teamwork—all these can become part, not just of the

preparation and training of the individual missionary, but also of the organizational

ethos that grounds their work in the field. In all these areas of resilience skill,

missionaries and those who care for and about them can recognize that it takes

intention and work to avoid the bad and pursue the good.

As a grace, resilience is also more than the effort we put into it. The grace of

resilience, not just for missionaries, but for all of us, must be received from God.   This

movement begins with the acknowledgement that we are not now what we hope to

become, that we are not able to face breaking-adversity alone. It includes turning

toward God and simply asking that the resilience of the Resurrected Christ would be

imparted to us. Resilience is an undeserved gift that God chooses to bestow and we

long to receive.

The fourth implication I see in these results is primarily for those who lead,

equip, send, and care for missionaries: We have to acknowledge what is and what is

not our responsibility. Like missionaries, we must accept our own limitations, the

reality of the systems in and from which we operate, and the preeminence of God's

work in Mission. We are often tertiary, less important in the missionary's day-to-day.

It's our job to equip missionaries as well as we can, and to intervene in special

circumstances, but also to encourage and release them to find the support they need

in the field from others. This tertiary role does not mean, however, that those who send

missionaries are not important. We can be safe leaders, long-term companions, and

calling-confirmers. We can be available to hear missionaries' stories—we can listen to

them and support them as they make meaning in their lives through narrative.

Finally, this research has led me to conclude that all of us who care about missionaries and want to see them thrive can learn from them to embrace the tension that is resilience. It is a painful truth that, in this life, not all things are redeemed: "No story is perfect—not even a story of redemption."[548] Taking the idea of a redemption sequence too far, forcing a redemption sequence, or deceiving ourselves about it in order to find the positive[549]—these things make "redemption" a caricature of itself.

There is a temptation, especially in the Christian community, toward a toxic positivity that insistently puts a "silver lining" on bad things in an effort to make them disappear. To whitewash the pain involved, or to claim that the Resilience Cycle is universal, is to cheapen both resilience and peoples' experience of it. Not everyone is progressing in their resilience, and even for the Christian, not all suffering is redeemed this side of Heaven. And even when adversity leads to growth, this does not mean that loss, trauma, loneliness, and brokenness have no long-term consequences or negative effects.

And yet…

There is hope. In the stories of these missionaries, we see that trust and dependence can be based in experience, not in denial. In their lives, we see the continuing possibility of resilience—that pain happens, but on the other side we **can** find beauty. Rather than being a shame to be discarded, brokenness can become a treasured history to cherish.

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[548] McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 211. See also xix, 211-229.

[549] McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 212, 227, 229.

I was recently sent a short video detailing a concept that I think perfectly encapsulates this tension: the Stockdale Paradox.[550] Admiral Jim Stockdale was a prisoner of war in the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" for eight years during the Vietnam War. When asked how he had been able to survive torture, pain, and uncertainty when others had not, he said that he had "never lost faith in the end of the story," but that he was different from "the optimists" who believed they would be out by the next holiday and then died of a broken heart when that did not happen: "This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."[551] What I hear in these missionary stories— the way they have been able to become resilient missionaries—is this same tension.

Resilient missionaries acknowledge and accept the current reality, and they also have ultimate faith. Resilient missionaries have picked up their cross to follow Christ. It truly **is** a Cross, one which will inevitably lead to pain and suffering, to being crucified with Christ.

And…

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[550] Ali Abdaal, "The Stockdale Paradox, " December 6, 2022, YouTube video, 0:58, accessed January 18, 2023, https://youtube.com/shorts/vwMNJGNV0xE?feature=share

See also: Jim Collins, "The Stockdale Paradox: A Message for Uncertain Times," Good to Great, March 31, 2020, YouTube video, 6:41, accessed January 18, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvWWO7F9kQY

[551] Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001)*,* 83-85, accessed online December 22, 2022, available at https://jobtransition.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/The-Stocksdale-Paradox-from-Good-To-Great.pdf

An excellent step-by-step guide to putting the Stockdale Paradox to work towards better mental health can be found at:
Mark Freeman, "The Stockdale Paradox for Mental Health (And Pandemics)," May 1, 2020, YouTube video, 13:37, accessed January 18, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2NM7b409Ko

Resilient missionaries look forward, believing that, "if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5). They claim that, "if we died with Him, we will also live with Him" (2 Timothy 2:11). They trust that, "through the Cross, joy has come into all the world" (Resurrection Matins of the Orthodox Church).

Each of us who follow Christ can learn from Resilient Missionaries. We hold the pain of the Cross, and we turn toward the hope of the Resurrection. This is true Resilience.

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Appendix A:

A Brief Synopsis of the Analysis of the Demographic portion of the Resilient Missionary Survey

The participants in this quantitative portion of the Resilient Missionary Survey showed a great deal of diversity. They reported 41 passport countries and worked in 148 countries. The length of service, age of participants, age at which participants began missionary work, marital status, denominational affiliation, ministry function, and agency size all varied. The sample tended to skew toward women (69.7%), Protestants (95+%), and married respondents (60.7%).

Analysis of this initial quantitative survey portion was done by first categorizing participants according to CD-RISC score into: the mean score was 71.97, with a standard deviation (SD) of 10.35. Participants were grouped into "Resiliency Groups": "Highest" (+2 SD), "High" (+1 SD), "Average" (0 SD), "Low" (-1 SD) and "Lowest" (-2 SD). Analysis was done by category in an effort to find correlation between resilience and demographic and psychographic data. The statistically significant findings of the demographic analysis were: a positive relationship between CD-RISC scores and age,

a difference in CD-RISC scores for those who worked in different UN Regions, a

negative relationship between CD-RISC scores and the year individuals began working

in the field (likely reflecting the correlation with age), and a positive relationship

between the number of ministry roles and CD-RISC scores.

For further analysis of the survey portion of the Resilient Missionary Study, see

"How Do Missionaries Become Resilient?: Preliminary Findings from the Resilient

Missionary Study."