
Book Review



Elliston, Edgar J.

Introduction to Missiological Research Design

Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011. 229 pages.

\$15.00

In *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, Edgar J. Elliston introduces the reader to the process of designing missiological research. He contends that missiology, besides being a full-fledged academic discipline, is also complex; and as such, no single disciplinary approach, or a combination of disciplinary approaches adequately address the issues related to research methods in mission. However, because the specific focus of missiology is on what God has done, is doing, and intends to do to accomplish his purpose for human beings, other academic disciplines such as anthropology, communications, economic, history, sociology, history, and many others undergird missiological research.

The twelve chapters of the book are structured in two main parts: the first part of seven chapters outlines a step by step process of doing missiological research, and the second of five chapters focuses on how other academic disciplines such as biblical theology of mission, education, communication, history, sociology, and their research methods contribute to missiology.

Introduction to Missiological Research Design is a rich resource of collective insights from scholars from different academic backgrounds and is characterized by numerous strengths. The book also argues in favor of missiology being viewed as a full-fledged academic discipline that ranges across the physical, socio-cultural, and spiritual environments in which people live. As such, it necessarily calls for the insights of all those disciplines related to human life. Also, because of the dynamic human situa-

tions, a combination of views is essential to deal with the complexities of the discipline of missiology.

Identifying and focusing the central research issue is often the most difficult yet the most important part of any research project. Fortunately this easy-to-read book explains in detail all the steps involved in a research process from the research topic selection, the description of the context of the research project, the purpose, goals, significance, and scope of the research.

Selecting an appropriate research method or methods is crucial for successful research. The author simplifies this difficult task by dividing research methods into three broad categories: descriptive, experimental, and evaluative research, noting that it is the descriptive and evaluative research methods that are used extensively in missiological research. By further dividing research methods into qualitative and quantitative approaches, the author makes it even easier for researchers to narrow their focus for in-depth study.

On reporting research findings, the author does well to stress that researchers must be objective enough to report both negative and positive results even if this does not support their assumptions, hopes, or hypotheses. On writing the conclusions and recommendations of a study, the general principles outlined in this book are timely as they help avoid the tendency to hastily state conclusions and recommendations in other sections of the study rather than at the end of the research.

The tables, figures, graphs, and appendixes in this book are a tremendous help in staying focused on the goals of the study. One other major strength of this book is the skillful combination of the author's vast experience (he has been a missionary and has coached more than 200 doctoral dissertations related to missiologically-focused education of students from more than eighty countries) with the contributions of other authors who are also well versed in specific areas of expertise. The author succeeded well in showing practical ways whereby the discipline of missiology gains by incorporating other academic disciplines. This gives a wider authority to the discipline of missiology as it seeks to holistically address the needs of human beings.

Besides the above area of strengths, this book like any other good book has other areas that need revision or further attention. The table of contents mentions "Part II" but leaves out "Part I." The second part consists of five chapters not four as mentioned on page xxi. Figure 7 on page 78 gives a good summary on how to evaluate a research process. But using numbers (1 to 9) in the chart and the same type of number (1 to 9) in the explanation of the chart without these numbers matching each other makes it difficult to fully understand the chart. Data collection and analysis is

central to any research project. The author describes in details the means of data collection (observation and questions, interviews, focus group) but did not give examples on how to practically and systematically analyze the data collected. The quality of this book's binding is very poor. Despite careful handling, the book falls apart before one gets to the end. Its wonderful content deserves a better binding.

These concerns aside, this is a landmark work in missiological research and education that ought to be read by all mission professors, missionary practitioners, and students focusing on missions and intercultural studies.

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